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EDITORIAL

IT IS COMMONLY HELD THAT THE REFORMATION BROUGHT FREEDOM OF CONscience and religious liberty to Europe. The contrary is true; most of the reformers were as intolerant as the Roman church. The Anabaptists were the only Reformation group consistently advocating freedom of faith, separation of church and state, and toleration of divergence in religious matters, although individuals like Sebastian Franck and Sebastien Castellio were outstanding exceptions, particularly the latter. The Anabaptists did not produce any extensive literary defense of their position, such as Castellio did, but from the very beginning of the movement they gave constant witness to their strong convictions on this great principle. This fact has long been known in a general way, but the present article, "The Anabaptists and Religious Liberty in the 16th Century," earlier published in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, presents the first extensive compilation of the evidence. In addition to the direct quotations from both Anabaptist leaders themselves and their opponents, the author sets forth the underlying reasons for the Anabaptist position. He shows that it was not only their Biblicism with its desire to follow both the commandments of Christ and his example, but their fundamental conception of Christianity as a matter of voluntary commitment to follow Christ, which motivated them. The place of the Anabaptists in the history of religious liberty has been recognized by a few European scholars like Troeltsch and Kühn, but outside of Rufus Jones, American scholars have failed to acquaint themselves with the Anabaptist testimony and are generally ignorant of its significance. Other forces besides Anabaptism have played a major role in the development of modern religious tolerance but the Anabaptist contribution should not be forgotten.

THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO BIBLICAL PACIFISM (NONRESISTANCE) IS THAT derived from the assumption that the Christian must assume responsibility for the maintenance and administration of the social order and Western civilization. The argument is that since this cannot be done without the use of force, even unto war, because of the inherent and ineradicable sinfulness of man, the obligation and ethical rightness to use force is a part of the Christian's lot regardless of the plain teaching of Christ which admittedly denies such an ethical position. This challenge has been most vigorously and effectively delivered by Reinhold Niebuhr. Unique in Niebuhr's critique is the fact that he uses none of the common and typical casuistry to void the plain teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and other New Testament passages which make love the overriding Christian obligation. Niebuhr is aware of the Mennonite position of a pacifism which refuses to accept political responsibility, and respects it as sincere and as a useful contribution which reminds those who do assume political responsibility of their violation of the supreme law of love that ought to be the Christian's standard, even though (Niebuhr says) it cannot possibly be carried out in our present sinful society.

It is good that the Niebuhrian critique should be thoroughly examined and its challenge met. Several pacifists have undertaken the answer, notably G.H.C. Macgregor and A. J. Muste. John Howard Yoder, from whose current article, "Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism," the above comments have been largely drawn, also undertakes the answer. Although his article is mostly descriptive, outlining Niebuhr's position from his several writings since 1932 which deal with this subject and summarizing the answers of Macgregor and Muste, his constructive discussion penetrates deeply into the foundations of Niebuhr's position. Conceding the solid contribution of the latter's anthropology with its true understanding of the depth, pervasiveness, and power of sin in man and society, Yoder nevertheless holds that Niebuhr's basic position is seriously defective. These defects are: (1) the unproved assumptions underlying his rejection of pacifism, namely, "impossibility, necessity, and responsibility," (2) lack of faith in the grace of God to enable the Christian to actually achieve the

(Continued on page 166)

The Mennonite Quarterly Review

THE ANABAPTISTS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN THE 16TH CENTURY*

HAROLD S. BENDER

I. Introduction

It is a deeply disturbing fact that the victory for toleration in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries was to a large degree due not to the will of the dominant Christian churches, Catholic or Protestant, but to the will of rulers exhausted by religious wars and determined to find a basis for peace in the European community which would transcend the warring religious parties; or to the growing rationalism, secularism, and materialism of the politically ever more powerful upper middle class, which placed religion low in the scale of cultural values and, in the words of Frederick the Great, was quite willing to have everyone be "saved after his own fashion"—or in the words of Theodore Beza a century and a half earlier, "to go to hell in his own fashion." And it was no less than shocking to hear Professor Bainton say in his presidential address of 1940 to the American Society of Church History that "the Reformation at the outset brought no gain for religious liberty. Rather the reverse, for Protestantism arrested secularist tendencies and made religion again the pre-eminent concern of men for another century and a half. The spirit of persecution was thereby aroused."[1]

* An address given at the American Society of Church History meeting, New York City, December, 1952. Reprinted from *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 44 (1953) 32-50.

1 R. H. Bainton, "The Struggle for Religious Liberty," *Church History*, X (1941), 96.

Today we are rallying our total Christian forces in the battle against secularism, and it would be most gratifying to be able to state that religion has again become the pre-eminent concern of men for even a few decades. We desperately need that depth of religious faith and intensity of conviction which alone can make a religion work, and in particular can make the Christian solution of the urgent problems of our world possible. Is then depth of religious conviction incompatible with religious liberty? Was there nothing in the sixteenth century but the intolerance of the religious majorities, the "great persecuting sects," as Menno Simons called them, on the one hand, or, on the other, the disintegrating spiritualistic individualism of a Sebastian Franck, who would have no organized church at all (Ich will unnd mag nicht Baepstisch sein, ich will unnd mag nitt Luthrisch sein, ich will unnd mag nitt Zwinglisch sein, Kein Widerthauffer will ich sein),[2] or of a Castellio, who, as Bainton says, "comes close to reducing the church to an invisible fellowship,"[3] or of a Schwenckfeld who would delay the establishment of the true church until some more convenient season, i.e., when the persecution had relaxed? There was indeed an alternative, in what one sixteenth-century contemporary called "the middle way" between Catholicism and Protestantism, namely, Anabaptism. This was a movement which matched in religious intensity anything the century had to offer, which outlived the bitterest persecution by all the various ecclesiastical and political authorities, and which from the very beginning of its history in 1525 throughout the century, from Grebel and Hubmaier to John Smyth and Thomas Helwys after 1609, in every corner of Europe where it appeared (from Zürich to Austerlitz, from Courtrai to Groningen, from Strasbourg to Marburg, and from Cologne to Koenigsberg), unceasingly challenged Christendom to free religion from compulsion and to stop burning heretics. This paper will attempt to justify this claim and show that the Anabaptist position on religious liberty derives not from any merely prudential, rationalistic, or ethical considerations, but from its central understanding of the nature of Christianity.

Before entering upon the discussion, it may be in order to inquire whether the Anabaptists actually made a direct contribution to the later development of religious liberty, which came largely after the sixteenth century, or whether we deal in this paper only with a historical curiosity, interesting but not materially important for the later achievement of freedom. More than one treatise on religious

2 P. Wackernagel, *Das Deutsche Kirchenlied,* III (Leipzig, 1870), 817.
3 R. H. Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia, 1951).

liberty seems to be unaware of any Anabaptist contribution. The most recent book on this subject, M. Searles Bates, *Religious Liberty, an Inquiry* (1945), fails even to mention the Anabaptists; and Professor Bainton's 1940 presidential address likewise omits them, although his recent book, *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (1951), includes an Aanabaptist of rather dubious character.

On the other hand, other outstanding scholars have been insistent that Anabaptism stood in the forefront of the struggle for religious liberty and was the source and channel for the ideas of toleration which later became dominant in England and America, in particular as the link between humanism and Independency. Ernst Troeltsch, in his *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (translated as *Protestantism and Progress),* speaking of the period of Cromwell and Independency in England, states this view as follows: "Out of this mighty episode remained the idea of separation of church and state, the toleration of various churches alongside each other, the principle of voluntarism in the establishment of denominations, freedom of conviction and thought in all matters of religion and Weltanschauung. . . . Here is the end of the medieval culture concept, for the beginning of modern individual, nonecclesiastical culture now steps in to replace the old state-church compulsory culture. It is at first a purely religious idea, which then becomes secularized and overlaid with the rationalistic, skeptical, and utilitarian idea of toleration. On the continent it was given a purely rationalistic foundation, but its roots are in the English revolution. In its religious power it prepared the way for modern freedom. But all this is not actually the work of Protestantism, but rather the work of a revived Anabaptism and spiritualism (merged with a radicalized Calvinism), which thus received a belated compensation for the boundless suffering which this religion of toleration and personal convincement of conscience endured at the hands of all the confessions in the sixteenth century. Here the stepchildren of the Reformation finally enjoyed their great historical hour."[4]

Ernest Payne of Oxford quotes H. N. Brailsford as having recently said, "The English Puritan Left can be understood only when we realize that it drew much of its inspiration directly from the Swiss, German, and Dutch Anabaptists."[5] Payne himself says, "It was from the Left-Wing of the Reformation Movement of the sixteenth century that there was first put forward the then new and revolutionary principle of religious toleration. . . . It was the pleas and claims

4 E. Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (München, 1911).

5 E. Payne, *The Anabaptists of the 16th Century* (London, 1949), 5 ff.

made by the Anabaptists and the staunchness with which they endured persecution from both Catholics and Protestants which prepared the way at last for a wider and wiser charity." Professor Walther Koehler of Heidelberg asserted regarding the historical significance of the Anabaptists, "They dare to claim a place in world history as the pioneers (*Bahnbrecher*) of the modern world view with its freedom of conscience and freedom of faith."

Rufus M. Jones wrote in his *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909): "Judged by the reception it met at the hands of those in power, both in church and state, equally in Roman Catholic and in Protestant countries, the Anabaptist movement was one of the most tragic in the history of Christianity; but, judged by the principles, which were put into play by the men who bore this reproachful nickname, it must be pronounced one of the most momentous and significant undertakings in man's eventful religious struggle after the truth. It gathered up the gains of earlier movements, it is the spiritual soil out of which all nonconformist sects have sprung, and it is the first plain announcement in modern history of a program for a new type of Christian society which the modern world, especially in America and England, has been slowly realizing—an absolutely free and independent religious society, and a state in which every man counts as a man, and has his share in shaping both church and state."[6]

Johannes Kühn, in his *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (1923), says in speaking of the Anabaptist ideal of complete religious liberty: "It is inconceivable that this spirit, so deeply felt and carried through all Central Europe, which lived in hundreds of thousands and not seldom forced opposing rulers to serious reflection, did not contribute a great deal to the uprooting of the prevailing concept of the church and the compulsion connected with it. It helped to evoke the recognition of the religiously autonomous personality, thus going beyond the actual Anabaptist position . . . . If we could analyze the intellectual process of the movement for freedom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the chemist analyzes his material, we should without doubt find in it the element of the Anabaptist spirit of the Reformation period."[7] And Bradford Smith, in his recent biography, *Bradford of Plymouth* (1951), does not hesitate to identify the Pilgrim libertarian tradition which ultimately won out over the Puritan authoritarianism in New England as essentially Dutch and significantly Anabaptist in origin.

6 R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London, 1909), 369.
7 J. Kühn, *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (Leipzig, 1923).

I shall not attempt to prove the above claims or follow the indicated connection as it has been traced through the Dutch Anabaptist-Mennonites to England, but rather content myself with an exposition of the views and practices of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists in matters of religious liberty, drawing heavily from sources of the first forty years of the movement, 1525-65. It will be remembered that Anabaptism arose in Switzerland, precisely in Zürich, early in 1525; that it spread rapidly throughout the whole of Teutonic Europe—down the Rhine to the Low Countries, both Flanders and the Northern Provinces, through Germany to the North and Baltic seas and on up to Koenigsberg in East Prussia; that it won adherents from all classes, including some from the lesser nobility, though it was largely a lower class movement; and that it was essentially a peaceful, evangelical, and creative religious movement of great power, conceiving of itself as reproducing New Testament Christianity and as completing the arrested Reformation begun by Luther and Zwingli. The fringe aspects of the movement, whether in the brief apocalypticism of a Melchior Hofmann (1530-33), or that still briefer and tragic revolutionary episode of Münster (1534-35) and the Batenburgers, or the individualistic spiritualism of a Johann Bünderlin (1526-29), are not typical of the main movement in any sense, however much they have been so interpreted in the past. What the Anabaptists were most concerned about was a true Christian "life," that is, a life of conviction, discipleship, and holy living, patterned after the teaching and example of Christ and expressed in a holy community and brotherhood. They actually believed that this could be accomplished in this present world by the help of the grace of God, provided the individual voluntarily committed himself to it and the church was constituted only of such committed individuals in a true fellowship of love. This vision they openly and unremittingly attempted to realize in the face of persecution of the most dreadful severity by authorities both Catholic and Protestant, Lutheran and Reformed, church and state. It should be added also that the movement was the opposite of individualistic, having a full church order and discipline, emphasizing most strongly the centrality of the church, even to the point of completely communal living by the Hutterite brotherhood of Moravia.

II. Anabaptist Testimonies on Religious Liberty

Let us first hear Conrad Grebel (d. 1526), the actual founder of Anabaptism in Zürich in January, 1525, who emphatically states his position in the letter to Thomas Müntzer of Sept. 4, 1524,

as follows: "Go forward with the Word and establish a Christian church with the help of Christ and His rule, as we find it instituted in Matthew 18 and applied in the epistles. Use determination and common prayer, and reform acording to faith and life, without command or compulsion; then God will help thee and thy little flock to all sincerity, and the singing and the tablets will cease. There is more than enough of wisdom and counsel in the Scripture, how all classes and all men may be taught, governed, instructed, and turned to piety. Whoever will not amend and believe, but resists the Word and doings of God and thus persists, such a man, after Christ and His Word and rule have been declared to him and he has been admonished in the presence of the three witnesses and the church, such a man, we say, taught by God's Word, shall not be killed, but regarded as a heathen and publican and let alone.

"Moreover, the Gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves, which, as we learn from our brother, is thy opinion and practice. True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter; they must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death; they must be tried with fire, and must reach the fatherland of eternal rest, not by killing their bodily enemies, but by mortifying their spiritual enemies. Neither do they use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them."[8]

Of Felix Manz, the closest associate of Grebel and the first Zürich Anabaptist martyr (January, 1527), the Zürich court records show that twice in 1525 and 1526 he admitted that he taught that those of other faiths are to be left undisturbed in their practice.[9] This is a negative statement, indeed, but one that clearly implies the recognition of the rights of other religious persuasions to freedom.

In his petition of December, 1524, to the Zürich Council, answering Zwingli's charge of sedition against the group, Manz pleads that no force be used to suppress those who reject infant baptism, pleading that the Word of God be allowed full course, "for if it be allowed to speak of itself freely and singly, no one will be able to withstand it, . . . if only freedom be given and the truth be treated with trust." He entreats them "most earnestly that you do not stain your hands with innocent blood supposing that you are serving God should you kill or exile persons."[10]

8 H. Böhmer and P. Kirn, *Thomas Müntzers Briefwechsel* (Leipzig, 1931), 97. English translation by Walter Rauschenbusch. "The Zurich Anabaptists and Thomas Müntzer," *American Journal of Theology*, IX (January, 1905).

9 H. S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel* (Goshen, 1950), 159.

10 Bender, *op. cit.*, 149. L. von Muralt-Schmid, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz: I. Zürich* (Zurich, 1952) 23-27.

The refusal of both Grebel and Manz, and for that matter of all the Swiss Brethren, to recognize the jurisdiction of the state in matters of faith, and their insistence that toleration would not undermine the state as Zwingli claimed, finds its first direct expression at the second Zürich Disputation of October, 1523, when Grebel and Stumpf openly opposed Zwingli's decision to submit to the Zürich City Council the matter of the reformation of the Zürich Church. Here is where the first break in the Reformation occurred that led inevitably to the founding of Anabaptism. In 1523-25, at Zürich, are the crossroads from which two roads lead down through history: the road of the free church of committed Christians separated from the state, with full religious liberty; and the road of the state church, territorially fixed, depending on state support, and forcibly suppressing all divergence, the road of intolerance and persecution. It is the same decision which Luther also consciously made, though he was not so directly challenged on the issue by the Anabaptists. Freedom of conscience and separation of church and state were, of course, not the central principles of Anabaptism; however, they logically accompanied its basic position and were always held by it.

Let us next hear Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier, who had become a full Anabaptist by baptism in March, 1525, by 1526 was leader of the large congregation at Nikolsburg, Moravia, and was burned at the stake in Vienna in May, 1528. His four-page pamphlet, *Von ketzern und iren verbrennern,* was submitted to the vicar of Constance on January 24, 1524, while he was still the Lutheran pastor at Waldshut, and has been called the first Protestant declaration for religious freedom. In the thirty-six articles of this clear and unequivocal statement[11] Hubmaier pronounces the very idea of "heretic" an invention of the devil, calls for the loving and patient instruction of heretics and their persuasion by sanctified teachers as the only possible way to overcome them, and declares that heretic-burners violate the teaching and example of Christ, actually denying Him while outwardly appearing to be Christian. Here are some major excerpts: "So it follows that the slayers of heretics are the worst heretics of all, in that they, contrary to Christ's teaching and practice, condemn heretics to the fire. By pulling up the harvest prematurely they destroy the wheat along with the tares . . . . A Turk or a heretic cannot be persuaded by us either with the sword or with fire, but only with patience and prayer, and so we should wait patiently for the judgment of God . . . . It cannot serve as an

11 I used the translation by George Davidson in the unpublished English edition of Hubmaier's Complete Works, sponsored by William O. Lewis. See Carl Sachsse, *Balthasar Hubmaier als Theologe* (Berlin, 1914), 9 ff.

excuse (as they claim) that they transfer the sinner to the temporal power, for he who so delivers them has the greater sin (John 19) . . . . Therefore let the temporal power duly slay evildoers (Rom. 13), and those who have attacked the defenseless. But the foes of God no one should harm, for He Himself would have it not otherwise, and the Gospel leaves it thus. . . . So, to burn heretics is to recognize Christ in appearance, but to deny Him in reality . . . . Now let this saying be evident to everyone, even to the blind: the heretic is an invention of the devil."

Hans Denk was one of the gentlest, most attractive spirits of the whole Reformation period (Troeltsch), more of a spiritualist than an Anabaptist, yet an outstanding Anabaptist leader for a time, who died of his hardships in the house of Bentinus in Basel in November, 1527. The spirit of his several writings speaks for love, peace, and tolerance, and he specifically calls for tolerance: "Everyone should know that in matters of faith everyone should proceed as free, voluntary, and uncompelled."[12] In his picture of the true "Gottesstaat" he says, "When the right Gospel is practiced there will be such a state in external matters also, that every man will permit every other man, be he Turk or heathen believing what he will, to travel and dwell through and in his land. . . . No one will take vengeance on another, whether Turk, heathen, or Christian, but permit him to dwell and move in every land in the name of his God."[13]

In his final statement to Oecolampad shortly before his death, erroneously and gloatingly published by Oecolampad two years later as *Hans Dencken wid'ruff,* Denk writes of "Sects" as follows: "Wheresoever there are hearts that cherish this good work of God through Christ and follow in His steps, I rejoice over them and love them as well as I can recognize them, but as to those who do not wish to hear me and still cannot keep quiet about the things in which we differ, I cannot have much fellowship with them, for I do not feel the mind of Christ in such, but a perverted mind which tries to drive me by force from my own faith and compel me to accept his. . . . But he should know that in matters of faith everything should be voluntary and uncompelled. . . . Persecution, and other such fear, has separated me from others, but my heart is not turned away from them or from any God-fearing soul."[14]

One of the finest testimonies of all is that of Kilian Aurbacher of Moravia, who said in a letter of 1534 to Butzer in Strasbourg, "It

12 Quoted from W. Wiswedel, *Bilder und Führergestalten aus dem Täufertum,* I (Kassel, 1928), 151.

13 O. Vitalli, *Die Theologie des Wiedertäufers Hans Denk* (Offenburg, 1932), 44.

14 A. Schwindt, *Hans Denk* (Schlüchtern, 1922), 59.

is never right to compel one in matters of faith, whatever he may believe, be he Jew or Turk. Even if one does not believe uprightly or wants to believe so, i.e., if he does not have or want to have the right understanding of salvation, and does not trust God or submit to Him, but trusts in the creature and loves it, he shall bear his own guilt, no one will stand for him in the Judgment . . . . And thus we conduct ourselves according to the example of Christ and the apostles and proclaim the Gospel according to the grace that He has entrusted to us; we compel no one. But whoever is willing and ready, let him follow Him, as Luke shows in Acts. That this then also is an open truth, that Christ's people are a free, unforced, and uncompelled people, who receive Christ with desire and a willing heart, of this the Scriptures testify."[15]

At the Zofingen (Switzerland) disputation of 1532 between the Reformed clergy of Bern and the Anabaptists, the printed record quotes the Brethren as saying, "Clearly the Lord has instituted in His church no severer punishment than excommunication, which was also practiced by Paul. If now you would inflict punishment according to the Law, which is based on justice, the adulterer would have to be put to death without mercy and could not be spared, even if he repented. Thus the Law demands punishment according to strict justice, but the Gospel according to love by excommunication for repentance. . . . Therefore we do not admit or confess that the church has power to use the sword or to mete out punishment beyond excommunication."[16]

That this Swiss Anabaptist position was continued unchanged through two generations of persecution is evinced by an appeal of the Zürich Anabaptists to the City Council dated April 23, 1589, setting forth their principles. It asserts that "the state authorities have no place in the church of God, no right to control and persecute the conscience, and that this principle is not one which they, the Swiss Brethren, have only recently proved out of Scripture."[17]

But all this has been so well summarized by a bitter enemy of the Swiss Anabaptists, Heinrich Bullinger of Zürich, that even if we had no surviving quotations of the Anabaptists themselves, their position would be unmistakable. After thirty years of experience with the Anabaptists as leader of the Zürich Reformed Church, in his *magnum opus* of 1561 against them, *Der Widertoeufferen ursprung, fürgang, Secten, Waesen, fürnemen und gemeine jrer leer Artickel,*

15 A. Hulshof, *Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden te Straatsburg van 1525 tot 1557* (Amsterdam, 1905), 247.

16 *Handlung oder Acta der Disputation Gehalten zu Zoffingen im Aargau von den Predigern zu Bernn mit den Widertöuffern* (Zürich, 1532).

17 C. Bergmann, *Die Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich bis 1660* (Leipzig, 1916), 64.

ouch ire gründ und warumb sy sich absünderind unnd ein eigne kirchen anrichtend, mit widerlegung und antwort uff alle und jede gründ und artickel, Bullinger sets forth clearly and emphatically the Anabaptist belief in freedom of conscience, tries to refute it point by point, and defends the Zürich policy of intolerance and execution. According to Bullinger the Swiss Brethren asserted: "One cannot and should not use force to compel anyone to accept the faith, for faith is a free gift of God . . . . It is wrong to compel anyone by force or coercion to embrace the faith, or to put to death anyone for the sake of his erring faith. It is an error that in the church any sword other than that of the divine Word should be used . . . . The secular kingdom should be separated from the church, and no secular ruler should exercise authority in the church . . . . The Lord has commanded simply to preach the Gospel, and not to compel anyone by force to accept it . . . . It is the work of the great Judge to separate the tares from the good seed. This will be done by Christ at the last day only. For when in the parable of the tares among the wheat the servants came to their master saying, 'wilt thou that we go and gather in the tares?' his reply was, 'Nay, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; then I will tell the reapers to gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to be burned.' And since the field is the world and the tares are the children of the wicked one, or of the evil doctrine, and the Lord has clearly ordered, 'Let both grow together,' therefore the government should not undertake to destroy the tares by punishment and death . . . . Paul gives definite instruction regarding the attitude which the church should take toward a heretic, and says, 'A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, exclude.' So Paul instructs the church to exclude a heretic (Titus 3:10), not to torture, maltreat, or kill him . . . . The true church of Christ has the characteristic that it suffers or endures persecution but does not inflict persecution upon any one . . . . To put to death an erring man before he has repented means to destroy his soul. Therefore one should not kill him but wait for his conversion, lest both body and soul be destroyed. Often a man who is in fatal error forsakes it and turns to the truth."

Bullinger further attempts to justify the persecution when he says, "There are those who say that by approving and defending such punishment [as was meted out to the Brethren], we simply press the sword into the hands of those who have always persecuted and put to death evangelical people, and who will now storm and rage against them the more furiously. But those who assert this are doing us an

injustice. For the fact that some do misuse the sword in such a way [against Bullinger's party] is no valid argument that it should not be used at all." He then adds that to persecute and kill "evangelical people" is a "grievous, great sin which is crying to God for vengeance," but at the same time he insists that to put to death Anabaptists is a necessary, commendable work. "Since we admonish the Christian governments not to tolerate the dissenters, the Anabaptists call us men of blood who put to death good people who refuse to believe what we believe and practice."[18] These statements represent the position of virtually all the Protestant reformers of the state-church type.

Sebastian Franck's testimony in his *Chronica* of 1531, of a generation earlier, based on personal questioning of Anabaptists, says virtually the same thing: "As many as I asked about this answered that they were here to suffer with patience for Christ's sake, not to fight impatiently. Christians must not war for the Gospel's sake, for the Gospel teaches and desires that it be protected and confirmed not with the fist (as the peasants thought) but with suffering and dying. We are not to fight but to suffer, as we see in Christ and the apostles an example, who never called on force to protect their cause with the fist. They also criticize all those who teach a warlike Christ and want to win out for the Gospel by means of the sword, because they have no teaching or example for this from Christ, or the apostles, or the primitive church."[19]

A representative statement from the *Chronicle* of the Hutterian Brethren, written before 1542, will suffice to give the views of that branch of the Anabaptists: "Their teachings do Luther and Zwingli support and defend with the sword which [i.e., the sword] they really have received and learned from the father and head Antichrist, well knowing that the weapons of the Christian soldier are not carnal but mighty before God to destroy all human attacks. Wherefore faith is not to be compelled but is a gift of God. And Christ speaks to His disciples, 'If any man will follow me [meaning if any purposes and desires], let him deny himself and take up his cross.' He does not say, '[take up] the sword,' for that has no place whatsoever alongside the cross. These two stand together like Christ and Pilate; they are as alike as wolf and sheep in one stall."[20]

The greatest of the Anabaptist leaders was Menno Simons of Holland, who joined the group at Leeuwarden in 1536. Harried and hunted though he was with a price on his head, until his death in

18 H. Bullinger, *Der Wiedertoüfferen Ursprung*, etc. (Zürich, 1560), quoted from J. Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottdale, 1942), 325.
19 Sebastian Franck, *Chronica, Zeytbuch und Geschichtbibel* (Strassburg, 1531).
20 A. J. F. Zieglschmid, editor, *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* (Philadelphia, 1943), 44.

1561 at Wüstenfelde near Lübeck, he carried on a widespread activity as the recognized chief elder. His extensive writings (1539-61) give abundant and vigorous testimony on the cardinal points of religious liberty, noninterference of the state by force in matters of faith, complete separation of church and state, and the limitation of church discipline to the use of the ban. Since in 1536 the spectacle of the fanaticism at Münster stigmatized the peaceful Reformation sectaries, Menno conceived one of his most urgent tasks to be the defense of the peaceful Anabaptists from the accusations of conspiracy and revolutionary violence. So, in a lifetime of apologetic writing he repeatedly affirmed the nonresistant character of Anabaptism. But beyond declaring nonresistance as a group principle, he challenged princes and magistrates to cease their killing of dissenters as being both unchristian and ineffective. His abhorrence of coercion led him also to challenge the moral basis of any use of capital punishment in penal treatment.

Menno's underlying theme was that faith, as a gift of God, cannot be enforced by the coercive power of the state. This led him to assert that the state has no authority in matters spiritual. Belief or unbelief is not a legitimate concern of the state. The state has its sphere of duty in matters temporal—the preservation of order and the punishment of transgressors. He frequently wrote of freedom of individual conscience and plainly affirmed that the believer cannot comply with a secular compulsion upon the conscience. Joining the church is essentially a voluntary decision, which to be sure entails that one must accept the group discipline of the brotherhood according to the New Testament pattern.

In his open letters addressed to men in authority, Menno Simons asked rulers to be concerned for the welfare of "widow, orphan, and stranger" and to render justice without discrimination among all persons. He writes that he asks no favors of the government for his own group except sufficient protection so that in liberty of conscience they may "live, teach, labor, and serve the Lord."

Menno spoke severe words against the state churches of his day, so severe that one might conceivably question whether he respected the right of existence of those of other confessions. Although he found little good in the established churches, he did not dispute the probability of many Christians being in other confessional groups, and on the basis of his teaching that Christians must be active in works of mercy toward all mankind without exception, he practiced toleration. This was demonstrated in 1552 when he and a small group of Anabaptists were living at Wismar in Mecklenburg. In midwinter a ship

arriving at Wismar with a load of Zwinglian refugees from England was frozen fast a short distance from shore. Wismar, a Lutheran town, extended no aid, Menno relates, but Menno's own congregation assisted the refugees, provided them with bread and wine, and offered them financial aid, thus in fact respecting the integrity of those of other confessions. The climax of the story comes, however, when the Zwinglians whose lives Menno had saved disclosed his hiding place to the authorities, thus compelling him to flee.

Menno gave testimony to his views in the following excerpts from his writings:[21] "Tell me, kind reader, where have you, in all the days of your life, read in the apostolic Scriptures, or heard, that Christ or the apostles called upon the power of the magistracy against those who would not hear of their doctrine or obey their words? Yea, reader, I know to a certainty that wherever the government is to perform the ban with the sword, there is not the true knowledge, Spirit, Word, and church of Christ (II:71).

"Faith is a gift of God, therefore it cannot be forced upon anyone by worldly authorities or by the sword; alone through the pure doctrine of the holy Word and with humble, ardent prayer it must be obtained of the Holy Ghost as a gift of grace. Moreover, it is not the will of the Master of the house that the tares should be rooted up as long as the day of reaping is not at hand, as the Scriptural parable teaches and shows with great clearness . . . . Further I say: If the government rightly knew Christ and His kingdom, they would in my opinion rather choose death than with their worldly power and sword undertake to settle spiritual matters, which are not subject to the authority of man but to that of the great and almighty God alone. But now they [the magistrates] are taught by their theologians that they should arrest, imprison, torture, and slay those who are not obedient to their doctrine, as may, alas, be seen in many cities and countries (II:104) . . . .

"Beloved rulers and judges, if you take to heart these cited Scriptures, and diligently reflect upon them, you will observe that . . . you should not so unscrupulously, with your earthly and temporal power, undertake to adjust that which belongs to the jurisdiction and kingdom of Christ, the Prince of all princes; you should not by your iron sword judge and punish that which is reserved solely for the judgment of the Most High, namely, the faith and matters pertaining thereto, as also Luther and others maintained in the beginning of their labors, but after they had come to a higher and more exalted station, they had forgotten it all (II:303).

21 The quotations are all from *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* (Elkhart, 1871), Part II.

"Say, beloved, where do the Holy Scriptures teach that in Christ's kingdom and church, conscience, and faith which stand under the authority of God alone, are to be regulated and ruled by the violence, tyranny, and sword of the magistracy? In what instance have Christ and the apostles ever done, advised, or commanded this? For Christ says simply: 'Beware of the false prophets,' and Paul commands that a heretic is to be shunned after one or two admonitions. John says that we shall not greet or receive into our houses the transgressor who does not bring the doctrine of Christ. But they say not: 'Down with the heretics, arraign them before the magistrates, imprison them, drive them from cities and countries, cast them into the fire and water,' as the Roman Church has done for many years, and even now is found to a great extent among you who fancy yourselves to adhere to the Word of God" (II:118).

Concluding this gallery of Anabaptist witnesses for religious liberty are the founder of the Baptist Church in England, John Smyth, and his associate Thomas Helwys, both of whom were directly under Dutch Mennonite influence and were among the first advocates of complete religious freedom in England. The first Baptist confession of faith of 1611, written by Smyth, held that the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religon or matters of conscience, to force men to this or that form of religion, but to leave the Christian religion free to every man's conscience. Thomas Helwys' book, *The Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), insisted on universal religious liberty.

When one compares the witness on religious liberty of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists with that of Sébastien Castellio (d. 1563) in his outstanding book, *De Haereticis, an sint persequendi* (1554), he will find no literary treatise or even rational defense of the principle which approaches the power of Castellio's work.[22] He will find only simple, direct witness and challenge. For example, the four-page tract by Hubmaier written thirty years earlier, though powerful in its way, is only a brief personal confession. The Anabaptists from Grebel and Hubmaier on down dared to challenge directly the powers that be, advocated freedom in their preaching and writing, gave their lives for what their hearts and minds told them was right, and sought openly to build a church based upon free and voluntary consent and a personal, uncompelled experience of

22 Bainton, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-124. As for the attractive personality of Bernardino Ochino (d. 1565), his spirit is in the tradition of a Castellio, but his five exiles were hardly suffered specifically for the cause of religious freedom, and his writings only incidentally contribute to the issue. Sebastian Franck (d. 1543), a rationalistic spiritualist, was certainly a clear-cut believer in religious liberty, and one who advocated it in his writings, which were quite influential.

religion and commitment to Christ. Their steadfast refusal to yield to compulsion, and their doing so in nonresistant love and with a godly life, was perhaps their most effective support of the principle of religious liberty.

A good illustration of this effect of the Anabaptist steadfastness under martyrdom is the case of Nicholas Zurkinden, a leading member of the council of Bern and a good friend of Calvin. One of the Anabaptist executions of 1537 or 1538 in Bern made such an impression upon him that he never forgot it, and in 1554, seventeen years later, he wrote John Calvin about it as follows: "I freely confess that I also am one of those who desire to see the sword used as seldom as possible as a means of compulsion upon the opponents of the faith: and I am moved not so much by the Scripture passages which are cited, to keep the edge of the sword away from the treatment of matters of faith, as the unbelievable examples which have occurred in our time in the punishment of the Anabaptists. I was witness here when an eighty-year-old grandmother and her daughter, a mother of six children, were led to their death for no other reason than that they rejected infant baptism in accord with the well-known and common teaching of the Anabaptists. This one example out of many may suffice. It has deeply shaken me, and I fear the authorities may not remain within the limits which you assign to them, namely, that only the worst destroyers of faith and religion are to be punished with death." Later he again wrote to Calvin: "I know magistrates who regret to have participated in death sentences and who would rather have a hundred enemies than to have the death of a single human being on their consciences. I speak now not of Servetus and other blasphemers but of countless good persons."[23] Once Zurkinden met a fellow councilor of Bern coming from an Anabaptist execution who confessed to him that the poor victim had laid his neck before the executioner with a better conscience than he himself would probably have on his deathbed.

III. The Grounds of the Anabaptist Advocacy of Religious Freedom

Although no systematic or even summarizing books or tracts on religious freedom have been left by the Anabaptists, the grounds of their position are not hard to discover. They are basically six: (1) the teaching and example of Christ and the apostles; (2) the principle of voluntarism and free commitment in church membership; (3) the interpretation of Christianity as primarily a way of life in active

23 E. Bähler, *Nikolaus Zurkinden von Bern, 1506-1588, Ein Vertreter der Toleranz im Jahrhundert der Reformation* (Zurich, 1912).

discipleship to Christ rather than primarily as passive acceptance of the grace of God or reception of the Word and sacraments at the hands of the church or as a submission to a theology; (4) the obligation of Christian love to all, including unbelievers (Sermon on the Mount); (5) the concept of suffering as the way of victory, or a theology of martyrdom; (6) the concept of faith as a gift from God, and hence impossible to create by compulsion of man.

The first ground, that Christ and the apostles give no sanction to compulsion by teaching or example, and that on the contrary the spirit of Christ and the New Testament strongly indicates the opposite, would probably seem completely self-evident to us all today, whether or not we are Biblicists. How anyone could so misread the New Testament as to find in it the opposite, as the men of the Reformation did, and even use the authority of Christ to endorse persecution, seems utterly incomprehensible. To the Anabaptists, who were strict Biblicists, it was sufficient to know what their Lord and Master taught and exemplified; Him they followed unquestioningly. But they were not the only men who saw it. The great-spirited Philip of Hesse maintained throughout his life that "to take the life of those who believe differently, as is done in some principalities and countries, one cannot reconcile with the Gospel" (1559, in a memorandum to Johann Friedrich of Saxony).[24] And in his will he wrote: "We have never killed a human being because he believed wrongly —and we desire to admonish our sons also not to do so—for we hold this to be contrary to God, as is clearly indicated in the Gospel."[25] Philip did of course persecute heretics, but limited the penalties to imprisonment and exile.

The second ground, based on the principle of voluntarism, is an inevitable consequence of holding that only those shall be members of the church who choose to be so on the basis of personal faith and conviction. Unless this choice is free and uncompelled it can have no meaning. It follows that those who choose not to be Christian but to remain as a part of the world shall be undisturbed in their rejection, and that the two groups, the church and the world, shall remain in mutual toleration side by side until the end. This is the interpretation the Anabaptists give to the parable of the tares, placing the tares in the world, contrary to that of Luther and the other reformers who placed the tares within the church where they could remain unmolested, but required the state to destroy those who refused to come inside the church.

24 P. Wappler, *Die Stellung Kursachsens und des Landgrafen Philipp von Hessen zur Täuferbewegung* (Münster, 1910), 116.
25 *Ibid.*, 117.

The third ground, that of activism, is closely related to the preceding one, but goes much beyond it. If Christianity, either Protestant or Catholic, is basically and primarily something received which is absolutely necessary to salvation, whether intellectual truth, revelation, sacramental grace, or the Gospel Word, and if this can only be mediated by the church, then it can be made to seem reasonable that it is right and necessary for the custodian of these essentials to force them upon the lost world for the salvation of its soul. And this is actually openly asserted in the Reformation period by both Catholics and Protestants. It comports fully also with the concept of territorialism and a state church, which makes the ecclesiastical and secular authorities jointly responsible for the eternal salvation of the entire populace under them. Johannes Kühn, in his *Toleranz und Offenbarung*, has expounded this view, directly linking intolerance to the concept of revelation held by religious groups. As Kühn says, the Anabaptists conceived the essence of revelation as primarily the call of God to the conscience of man to follow the commands of Christ. Seeing in Christianity primarily the duty of active, aggressive discipleship and evangelism and of applying the Gospel by personal human effort to individual and social needs to the end of the progressive transformation of society, and seeing society not so much as a mass of persons with souls to be justified and saved as with lives to be transformed, the Anabaptists necessarily had to try to evoke from Christians the willing response to the call of Christ and their participation in that working out of the new life which is possible only in freedom and through the free working of the Spirit of God in man.

The fourth and fifth grounds, the principles of love and suffering, or love and the cross, are the heart of the Anabaptist interpretation of the Gospel. Bullinger's report on the Anabaptists says, "They teach that Christians dare not behave contrary to love; punishing or killing for matters of belief is contrary to love, therefore Christians persecute and kill no one for reason of his faith; rather, according to Paul, the one must carry the other's burden." Menno Simons asks whether we are baptized to the sword or to the cross, and explains further that the spirit of Christianity is that of love and not fratricide, submission and not resistance, and that the Christian would rather suffer than draw the sword. "The true church of Christ has this characteristic, whereby it is recognizable as the true church of Christ, that it suffers persecution and does not itself persecute." According to Bullinger, the Anabaptists accused the reformers of having abandoned their first and correct teaching on this point and

taken up the sword and military alliances to protect their cause, "thereby cancelling out the cross of Christ."

It should not be supposed that the Anabaptist concept of the willingly suffering church was one of defeat. Rather it was one of glorious victory, for the Anabaptists held that it is by the very means of nonresistant suffering that the world, the devil, sin, and unbelief will be finally overcome as Christ overcame it through His suffering and cross. As Ethelbert Stauffer has so clearly shown in his outstanding article, "The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom,"[26] the Anabaptists saw themselves as the successors to the prophets and apostles, and to Christ Himself, in the long and glorious train of suffering martyrs by whom God had chosen to conquer the world. Each new martyr was one more valiant witness for the Gospel joyfully doing his God-given part in establishing the kingdom of God in the world. How could such a people be anything else than heralds of religious liberty?

26 E. Stauffer, "The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XIX (1945), 179-214. Translated from *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, LII (1933), 545-98, "Täufertum und Märtyrertheologie."

REINHOLD NIEBUHR AND CHRISTIAN PACIFISM

JOHN H. YODER

Introduction

There can be no doubt that Reinhold Niebuhr's theology is the principal system of thought with which to come to grips if we on the Continent wish to consider pacifism as found in America today. Niebuhr's significance is also considerable in England and many of his books have been reprinted there, but on the Continent he is naturally less well-known and his writings are seldom if ever translated and not often discussed.

Niebuhr's importance has two aspects for us as pacifists. First, as the foremost American leader of what has been named the "neo-orthodox" theology, he represents for us a movement of thought which is both vigorous and popular, which is likely to influence our own thought as well as that of those to whom we wish to bring our peace witness. Secondly, Niebuhr matters to us because he talks to us. He addresses himself to the question of pacifism and nonresistance not once but several times, using it in fact as the clearest case of the essential problem of all Christian ethics, namely, how to bring down to earth the "impracticable" teachings of Jesus.

To understand fully Niebuhr's ethical approach and to appreciate how consistently it fits into the rest of his theology would require a lengthy introduction to his entire system of thought, especially as elaborated in his major work, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. To do such a study adequately would be much too long for this occasion; we must therefore content ourselves with a few summary paragraphs before passing on to the more specifically ethical aspects of his views.

I. Niebuhr's General Theological Orientation

First, a word as to Niebuhr's "neo-orthodoxy." This name has been attached to his school of thought because of his attack upon liberal humanism and rationalism and his rehabilitation of the doctrine of sin, which had gone somewhat out of fashion. In his opposition to the modern view of man and the world Niebuhr in America

* A paper read at the Seminar, "Modern Theological Thought and Its Criticism of Nonresistance," held at the International Conference Center, Heerewegen near Zeist, Netherlands, May 11-14, 1953, and first printed as *Heerewegen Pamphlet* #1 (Zeist, 1954). The author was graduated from Goshen College in 1947, and at the time this paper was prepared he was serving in France under the Mennonite Central Committee.

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is thus somewhat parallel to the leaders of the "dialectical" school in Europe, but it would be dangerous to push such a parallel too far.

Niebuhr's theology is first of all an anthropology, his doctrine of God first of all a doctrine of man. His interest is in man and man's predicament, and his approval for historic Christian doctrine lies chiefly in his contention that only the Biblical Christian view of man is adequate to explain both man's goodness and his sin, and to see both the positive and the negative values of his entanglement in the natural and historical world. He accepts this Biblical view not because of any orthodox respect for revelation but because it commends itself as the only adequate one. This general approach needs to be kept in mind in later discussion. In spite of the appearance of the label "neo-orthodoxy," Niebuhr is far from what a historian of theology could call orthodox, and almost as far from the theologies of the Word which are now the vogue in Europe. Niebuhr's starting point is not revelation but modern man's rational analysis of his nature and his predicament. God is significant chiefly as personification of the good and of the possibilities of pardon and transcendence.

This man-centeredness is in many ways close to the attitude of the Bible, which is also interested in man's needs and their resolution. But the Bible as we understand it, though preoccupied with man, does not begin with his predicament and derive from that a solution which it then expresses in appropriate myths. The Bible rather speaks of God as Him who, as part of His program for restoring the order whose destruction was not exclusively man's fault, meets man's need. That Niebuhr's anthropological slant, his preoccupation with the tension in which man finds himself, prevents him from giving full weight to the ethical importance of God's redemption will later be one of the theses of our criticism.

The essential character of man for Niebuhr is the paradoxical juxtaposition of freedom and unfreedom in his nature. On one hand, as an animal and a participant in the historical process, man is finite, ignorant, subject to external causes, and understandable as an interplay of given factors (animal drives, heredity, nervous and muscular faculties and limits, etc.). But at the same time man is transcendent. Being self-conscious and aware of his limits, he becomes to a certain degree free, and knows himself responsible for his choices. Man being thus a contradiction between the transcendent and the finite, or to use Niebuhr's favorite term, man being in a state of "tension," the whole problem of ethics and the whole problem of Christian doctrine is to do adequate justice to both poles of

this tension without relaxing it. To "relax" the tension means to analyze man, or ethics, in terms of only one pole, be it that of transcendence or that of finitude.

Sin, for instance, is man's effort to relax his tension either by making himself God (the sin of pride, affirming transcendence and denying finitude), or by finding his only motives in nature and the material drives of self-preservation (the sin of sensuality, denying transcendence and affirming finitude). Sin is not, as a Platonic dualism would see it, the fact of man's involvement in nature, but rather his wrong effort, once thus involved, to resolve the tension resulting from his belonging to both the realm of matter and that of spirit.

Just as a dualism may fail to do justice to man by separating two aspects of his nature and attempting to eliminate one of them, so also a monism is inadequate when it underestimates the tension between them. The modern liberal-optimistic world view affirms both man's finitude (e.g., in its confidence in education and social organization as causal factors capable of remolding him) and his transcendence (in its confidence in man's becoming continually more rational and thereby better), without perceiving that there exists between finitude and transcendence a tension which provides occasion for sin. Liberalism has thus no doctrine of sin, and sees man's failings as areas where further evolution in the direction of rationality will provide an easy solution.

The same sort of tension is to be seen in the field of ethics. The absolute good appeals to man's reason (the transcendence) whereas man must live on the level of the historically realizable (the finitude). Again the thinker's task is to do justice to both poles of the tension. On one hand it is wrong to give total authority to the historically given, as the church has done at certain stages of history when she became too easily the apologist of conservatism; on the other the monastic withdrawal from the world to a level of unreality where a perfect life is assumed possible is just as false a resolution of the dualism. And again the monistic error is that of thinking too optimistically, as did the liberalism of the social gospel, that a consistent application of the absolutes of ethics enters into the realm of historical possibility.

II. Niebuhr's Critique of Pacifism

Before turning from this brief introduction to a direct treatment of Niebuhr's attack on pacifism, we should note the writings which are most relevant, in addition to the larger work already named.

Moral Man and Immoral Society, first published in 1932, sets forth the thesis that human communities are always more selfish and less rational than individuals, and that what is possible for society is even less good than what is possible for an individual. This is of course decidedly relevant to the relationship between pacifism as an individual ethic and pacifism as a strategy for states.

An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, the Rauschenbusch lectures for 1934, treats the specific meaning for ethics of maintaining the tension between the good, which is impossible, and the possible, which is less than good.

Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist was published in 1939 as a pamphlet and also as part of *Christianity and Power Politics* in 1940. We shall proceed to a discussion of the content of this writing, which is a direct attack on pacifism as Niebuhr understands it.

To begin with, Niebuhr's conception of pacifism is not fully identical with Christian pacifism as expressed by the conscientious objector. Niebuhr once held pacifist convictions, and it is normal that the pacifism which he understands, and rejects, is not so much the post-World War II pacifism of conscientious objectors we are concerned about, but rather the pacifism of a particular group and a particular epoch in American political history. Pacifism for Niebuhr means the contention in the political area that a state should renounce the use of war as an instrument of national policy; he understands this position and attacks it on political grounds and with political problems in mind. He associates it with a certain complex of political judgments, such as the feasibility of universal disarmament and the reasonableness of Hitler, which were associated with a certain type of political pacifism. But the contention of historic Christian pacifism, that when a nation makes war the Christian should refuse to participate in the killing, is not directly grasped by Niebuhr, and thus cannot be directly refuted. This distinction between pacifism as a political policy for states and pacifism as an ethical principle for Christians will need to be kept in mind in the following discussion; even though most pacifists are pacifist in both senses of the word, their judgments on the two levels are not of the same order.

A. The Ethical Significance of Love

Niebuhr's reasoning begins with one item of basic agreement with the Christian pacifist: he accepts fully the belief that in the New Testament Jesus reveals the absolute normativeness of the law of love of the kingdom of God as final and authoritative revelation of

what is ethically ultimate. Not only does Niebuhr give general assent to the rightness of love, but he also agrees with us in defining that love in particular as the Sermon on the Mount defines it, as self-giving, non-retaliating, non-calculating, as mirroring the gracious love of God for the unworthy and disobedient sinner. He therefore has no respect for those who by a dubious exegesis attempt to justify violence on the basis of the Gospel.

This insight of Niebuhr into the spirit of Jesus' ethical teaching must be recognized by pacifists as a great forward step in the dialogue with nonpacifists. In most theological circles in Europe, and in orthodox and fundamentalist circles in America as well, the non-pacifist (even Karl Barth) tries to prove his point by arguing about the cleansing of the temple, the two swords at Gethsemane, or the soldiers whom John the Baptist did not tell to desert. Niebuhr has done a great service to truth in attacking, along with pacifists, the flimsiness of such arguments and thus bringing the debate nearer to the real point at issue.

The love of the Gospel ethic, Niebuhr admits, is not proposed as being first of all an effective social policy. It is not nonviolent resistance chosen pragmatically in preference to violence because of its greater effectiveness in the struggle for existence or for progress; it is rather nonresistance, unconditional obedience to the nature of love, making no promises of effectiveness. The ultimate expression of this ethic is the cross, and Christ's "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross," was the utter opposite of a calculating pragmatic choice of means.

Thus we might think Niebuhr practically ready to come over into the pacifist camp, but the consistency of his paradoxical thought prevents such a simple conclusion. Just as in other areas of doctrine there is here a tension to be maintained, and the demands of Jesus' nonresisting love must be balanced against the impossibility of our ever executing them. Because we ourselves are sinners we will not and because our society is sinful we cannot realize in our lives the love and unselfishness which this would require. Thus we find ourselves in a tension between the "simple possibility," i.e., that which can be achieved in the world, and the "impossible possibility," that which cannot be realized but which is normative for us and the ground of our being. Our norm is the love of Christ, the absolute will of God for us, but that love is never a simple possibility.

B. The Significance of Love's Impossibility

If consistent Christian love is impossible, is the ethical teaching of Christ entirely useless? Niebuhr would be the first to reject such a conclusion, and his judgment that love is impossible changes nothing in its claims upon us, which must be maintained in tension with their impossibility. In reality Niebuhr gives a very real relevance to the impossible, and his *Interpretation of Christian Ethics* contains a chapter entitled "The Relevance of an Impossible Ideal." There he demonstrates two aspects of the practical importance of love as the law of life.

First of all, to say with the Bible that love is the law of life means that before that law we are all condemned as sinners. This is the relevance of love as a principle of *indiscriminate criticism,* revealing to each of us his selfishness and rendering a great service to ethics by making self-righteousness impossible and thus preparing us for the Gospel. "The good news of the Gospel is not the law that we ought to love one another . . . [but] that there is a resource of divine mercy which is able to overcome a contradiction within our own souls [contradiction in that we love ourselves more than our neighbor]."[1] Only in the humility and the peace which the forgiveness of the Gospel gives us will we be able to act realistically and courageously.

But even though we are all sinners we are not all equally bad; though all attempts at realizing the good in human experiences are unsuccessful some come nearer the good than others. Love is therefore also relevant as a principle of *discriminate criticism,* guiding us to choose from among those ethical alternatives which are possible. To say with the Bible that love is the law of life means that in sinful society we should work for the closest possible approximation to the ideal voluntary community which perfect love defines. That closest approximation is represented by a society of equal justice where conflicting selfish interests are balanced against one another in the fairest possible way. The nature of this balance is sinful (egoism remains instead of self-giving love) and its support is sinful (in the ultimate sanctions of violence by which unsocial activity is restrained), but every achievement of justice is an expression of love's relevance and every system of justice may be further perfected by further efforts to be relatively less unloving.

Niebuhr sees three distinct problems arising from the contradiction that exists between love which is the law of life and sin which is the historical reality of man's failure to love. First of these prob-

1 *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York, 1940), 2.

lems is how to have peace in the face of this continuing contradiction. The answer is the Christian one, namely, the pardon of God. This forgiving grace, which as we have seen Niebuhr considers to be the heart of the Gospel, does not remove the contradiction by making man righteous; it rather enables him to live with the contradiction by assuring him of justification by faith.

The second problem is how human existence and the course of history can have any sense with human life remaining in conflict with its norm. This is the problem of eschatology, and the Christian answer is the myth of the second coming of Christ and other related concepts. We need not follow this idea in detail since it is outside the scope of our study.

The third problem arising from sin's permanence is how to achieve in such a situation a tolerable balance between egoisms in society. This is the problem of ethics, and its solution is not in pure love as a simple possibility (since love condemns any balance of egoisms) but in equal justice. This justice, it goes without saying, will require the use of force and sometimes even war.

C. The Ground of Love's Impossibility

We have seen how fundamental to Niebuhr's entire analysis is the impossibility of love as a real alternative for action. This impossibility can be further analyzed, and we find it to have three explanations. One is the simple experience of persisting selfishness in the life of the individual. No human action, no matter how much better it may be than other available alternatives at the time, is completely unselfish or completely free of pride and the other dimensions of sin.

A second source of this impossibility is the multiplicity of conflicting claims upon one's love. If I had only one neighbour it would be theoretically possible to love him completely, to respond without limit to his claims, even if selfish, upon me. But if two different persons both want my coat I cannot give my cloak to both of them. I cannot give all my goods to feed the poor and at the same time provide for my wife and children. Thus it comes to pass that in a complex society the claims of various needs, including the requirements of the vocation in which an individual serves society, conflict to the extent that it is never possible to love without limits, to give of oneself without reservation. Because the conflicting claims within society are all selfish claims it is further necessary, not only to fall short of complete unselfishness in attempting to meet real needs, but also to use methods falling short of love in order to minimize the exploitation of the weak by the strong. This must be done by sup-

porting the selfishness of the weak, since, although it be selfishness, its goals are nearer to equal justice than is the unchallenged domination of the selfishness of the strong.

The third reason for the impossibility of loving action in society is the thesis of Niebuhr's book *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. In this book he contends that groups of men are always less moral, more selfish, than the individuals which compose them. The social group, the clan, the class, or the nation has less imagination to understand the needs and the interests of others, less rational capacity to analyze its own actions and thus counteract its egoistic tendencies. Thus even if love were possible for individuals it would still be an impossibility for politics and social organization, which remain the realm in which justice is sought through a balance of power between the various group egoisms which conflict. Although these egoisms are all to be condemned as contrary to the law of love (which as we have seen exemplifies love as a principle of indiscriminate criticism), it remains true that some of them are closer to the interests of equal justice than others (love as principle of discriminate criticism).

Niebuhr supports a leftist position in economics, for instance, because the selfish interests of the working class are closer to equal justice than are the goals of the capitalists. He prefers democracy as a political system, not because of any illusions about its perfection, but because it best governs the interplay of group egoisms with the least violence and the greatest opportunity for change. With all their faults, the democracies were nearer equal justice than was the Nazi government, and thus the application of love as a principle of discriminate criticism justified war against Hitler, and will justify war against communism if other less brutal means of conflict fail. War, which Niebuhr prefers to call anarchy, is preferable to tyranny because of the openness it gives for a better realignment of forces, and also because Niebuhr thinks (in contradiction to his own ethics) that war is noble and surrender ignoble.[2]

D. The Criticism of Pacifism

We are now ready to list the precise criticisms leveled by Niebuhr against pacifism as a political strategy. Consistently with his whole systematic approach, his main complaint is that the pacifist considers the realization of love as a simple possibility in history. The contention that states can, in this world, refuse to use violence underestimates the presence of sin in the world (by predicting success for a pacifist strategy's appeal to good will) and thus in reality surrenders

2 *Ibid.*, 43, 44.

to sin too easily (letting a tyrant win without resistance). Refusing to go to war against a tyrant means complicity in his tyranny, which is worse than war because it marks a refusal to assume responsibility for correcting the situation.

> . . . the refusal to recognize that sin introduces an element of conflict into the world invariably means that a morally perverse preference is given to tyranny over anarchy. . . .
> The thesis that German tyranny must not be challenged by other nations because Germany will throw off its yoke in due time, merely means that an unjustified moral preference is given to civil war over international war. . . .
> Most pacifists who seek to present their religious absolutism as a political alternative to . . . the pressures and counterpressures of the political order, invariably betray themselves into this preference for tyranny. Tyranny is not war. It is peace, but it is a peace which has nothing to do with the peace of the kingdom of God.[3]

Not only does responsible action require a struggle against injustice, but the nature of the struggle is such that the methods of love are not effective. Their ineffectiveness is shown by the cross itself, which Niebuhr says is "the symbol of love triumphant in its own integrity, but not triumphant in the world and society." Not only do the methods of love fail to arrest evil; but by assuring an aggressor that he will meet no resistance pacifism can actually encourage aggression.

Pacifists tend often to point to the guilt and the selfishness of both parties to a war, in order to argue that one side is not much better than the other and thus cannot claim to be fighting for the good. While Niebuhr accepts this approach in line with the "indiscriminate criticism" function of the law of love, he objects strongly to its depreciation of the "discriminate criticism" which is just as necessary.

> . . . like a clash between imperialisms . . . so is a clash between myself and a gangster a conflict of rival egotisms. There is a perspective from which there is not much difference between my egotism and that of a gangster. But from another perspective there is an important difference.[4]

The particular case in point at the time Niebuhr wrote this was the beginning of World War II. Without denying that British or American motives were open to criticism, he insisted that "from another perspective" the war was nevertheless basically comparable to police action against a gangster in the interest of justice.

Pacifism commits an error in both exegesis and ethics when it argues that nonviolent resistance is the practical application of New Testament love in politics. Niebuhr insists that the New Testament

3 *Ibid.*, 15, 16.
4 *Ibid.*, 169.

teaches nonresistance, not nonviolence. Nonviolence is a pragmatic method, and on certain occasions may be preferable to violence. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* Niebuhr argues extensively in favor of nonviolence as a strategy "which offers the largest opportunities for a harmonious relationship with the moral and rational factors in moral life." But nonviolent resistance remains a means of coercion and of conflict, and is far from being a faithful translation of nonresisting love into social action.

E. The Validity of Pacifism

Such a pacifism, which considers pure love a simple possibility in politics, identifies nonviolence with pure love, and prefers tyranny to war, Niebuhr calls heretical. There is, however, a sort of pacifism which is not heretical, and which he even considers as necessary wherever there is religious vitality. We may briefly sketch the characteristics of this sort of pacifism, which is "a valuable asset to Christian faith."

It will, first of all, admit its inability to present practical solutions to political problems and and may even, in the sectarian perfectionist form which Niebuhr considers most consistent, conscientiously disavow all responsibility for social justice.

It will, secondly, avoid the danger of self-righteousness by remembering that the pacifist too is a sinner and that in other realms of life he does not apply the Gospel so seriously (the command, "be ye not anxious," for instance). Knowing himself to be also sinful, the pacifist would not accuse the leaders of responsible churches in society of apostasy when, in the legitimate interest of achieving a nearer approximation of equal justice, they approve of war as a final resort.

Such a pacifism is valuable as a reminder that war is horrible, that love is the law of life which should be kept in tension with the compromises which are found necessary, and that the violence of war endangers the goals it sets out to assure. Such a reminder if given in humility is useful.

III. Evaluation of Niebuhr's Critique

Before turning from this exposé of Niebuhr's judgment of pacifism to our judgment of Niebuhr's position, we should note the two pamphlets already written on the subject by pacifists, namely, G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Relevance of the Impossible* (London, 1941) and A. J. Muste, *Pacifism and Perfectionism* (New York, *ca.* 1951). Both respond directly to Niebuhr's argument, and the follow-

ing paragraphs have drawn from these works. Since our purpose in this paper is more descriptive than polemical this evaluation will consider the various arguments only briefly.

A. Areas of Agreement

We should first summarize the elements of Niebuhr's teaching with which we agree; they are significant:

(1) Nonresistant love is taught by the New Testament;

(2) Love is the ultimate ethical norm;

(3) Compromise always endangers the achievement of good ends;

(4) Both sides are selfish in war, in politics, and even in police action, and it is false to identify the interests of religion with a war.

There are further certain criticisms of pacifism which have a degree of validity, and which relate to the previously mentioned distinction between pacifism as a political policy and pacifism as personal refusal to participate in war.

(1) It is true that some pacifists, especially between the two World Wars, were over-optimistic as to the possibility of the easy solution of international problems and unaware of the depths of national selfishness and irrationality.

(2) It is true that nonviolence and nonresistance are not identical, and that nonviolent resistance as represented by Gandhi's disciples is a means of coercion in class, race, or party struggle. This is not to deny that it often is, and could always be, the better means of struggle, but the pragmatic grounds of nonviolent pacifism and the religious grounds of nonresistant pacifism should be distinguished. A pacifism which is advocated because it promises to be effective always risks by its own logic being driven to accept war when pacifism no longer appears successful. This obviously happened to much of the pacifist enthusiasm of the interwar period and it can also happen to Gandhism.

(3) The Christian, who has spiritual resources for unselfish and rational action, cannot expect of societies, which have not such resources and make no claim to be fully disinterested, a Christian degree of unselfishness and love. This is the drawback in any attempt to derive a social and political strategy from individual Christian ethics, and although Niebuhr formulates this observation differently in *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* his thesis has a degree of validity.

B. Areas of Disagreement

In analyzing our direct disagreement with Niebuhr, it would be a mistake to begin by responding to the precise arguments against political pacifism which are listed in *Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist;* our real disagreement with him is deeper and can be resumed under four heads.

First, and least basic, is his sentimental depreciation of the horror and sinfulness of war. He sees no real difference except in degree between the police function within a nation and war between nations, between modern total war and medieval knightly squabbles, Thus it is easy for him to prefer war to tyranny, praising the nobility of the instinct which prompts resistance, even if that resistance be futile and thus ethically unjustifiable. The "lesser evil" argument which he thus applies to the advocacy of war thus has two fallacies:

(1) a factual one, a false judgment as to whether, even on selfish grounds, modern war is a better means of conflict than nonviolence, or less harmful to civilization and moral values than tyranny;

(2) a moral fallacy in the failure to distinguish between agents. Slavery may be "worse than war" in the sense that it is more unpleasant for me; but in war the sin is mine, in slavery it is not.

The second area of disagreement is with the presuppositions of Niebuhr's ethical reasoning. In spite of his sharp analysis in many areas of thought he fails to analyze some of the assumptions which enter into his own system. These notions come to have the force of axioms even though they have never been submitted to exact examination.

(1) We may begin with the notion of impossibility. The impossibility of the good is, we have seen, a central element of Niebuhr's dialectic, but in reality this term has several possible meanings. Loving action may be impossible because in his freedom the individual is unwilling to sacrifice; or because, feeling some other value more important, he intentionally considers love as not binding; it may be impossible because he disposes of insufficient information or material resources, or because of already existing situations over which he is powerless; it may be impossible in the sense that, after carrying out an act thought good, he will see that it could have been better; it may be impossible only in the sense that society is by definition metaphysically corrupted by original sin. Analysis will show that these different kinds of impossibility are far from identical. Some involve guilt because real freedom existed and a real possibility was rejected for selfish or unselfish reasons. Others involve no freedom and thus no guilt (unless guilt is taken to mean a meta-

physical involvement in imperfection rather than a result of freedom misused) and are not ethical problems at all. This confusion between kinds of possibility hides the fact that were there no freedom there would be no duty. The existence of a moral imperative is meaningless if its accomplishment is excluded by definition. The observable phenomenon that there is pride and selfishness in every action proves not that there cannot be a loving act, but only that there are no perfectly loving agents, and this observation is not determinative for ethics, since ethics is not interested in what is, but in what ought to be, or, to state it in a Christian form, what is *in Christ.*

(2) A similar observation must be made concerning the concept of "necessity," which is given an absolute instead of an instrumental value. Nothing is necessary *in itself* as far as ethics is concerned: an act is necessary *in view of* a certain end. It is not necessary to eat unless I desire to avoid hunger and death; it is not necessary to defend myself unless I desire survival; it is not necessary to defend the social order unless I prefer it to that which would replace it. Thus there is no absolute necessity but only the *instrumental* necessity defined by that which stands to be gained or lost. There is no necessity of abandoning love as an ethical absolute unless something more important than love stands to be lost. This is in turn possible only if there is a moral absolute higher than love, and for a Christian such an absolute is difficult to imagine. In reality the term "necessity" is but a camouflage for some personal or group egoism, whether the survival instinct itself, unwillingness to surrender advantages, or something more abstract and less overtly selfish.

(3) A third dubious concept, one often used to support that of necessity, is that of "responsibility." As used by Niebuhr this means not our obligation to concern ourselves with all needs around us in terms of the love ethic; it means rather an inherent duty to take charge of the social order in the interest of its survival or its amelioration by the use of means dictated, not by love, but by the social order itself. This social order being sinful, the methods "necessary" to administer it will also be sinful. "Responsibility" thus becomes an autonomous moral absolute, sinful society is accepted as normative for ethics, and when society calls for violence the law of love is no longer decisive (except in the "discriminate" function of preferring the less nasty sorts of violence). Of course, according to pacifist belief, there exists a real Christian responsibility for the social order, but that responsibility is a derivative of Christian love, not a contradictory and self-defining ethical norm.

The fact that these concepts—impossibility, necessity, responsibility—are used by Niebuhr in such a way as to introduce new norms into ethics which, because of the existence of sin, are allowed to cancel out love may lead us to suspect a deeper error in Niebuhr's approach to morality. Apart from the more theological aspects to be treated later, this error is threefold:

(1) No amount of reasoning can derive an "ought" from an "is," an imperative from a declarative, a judgment of value from a judgment of fact. The fact that all are sinners is neither a reason nor an excuse for sinning. The fact reported by the American zoologist, Kinsey, that men are often immoral is no rehabilitation of adultery. The situation must be considered by ethics and must guide the application of the ethical ultimate, but the situation itself is incapable of providing the ultimate. Thus the existence of sin, the fact that all acts have selfish motives, cannot be admitted under the name "necessity" or otherwise as an ethical norm.

(2) The fact that Niebuhr does in effect rehabilitate the selfish motives of self-preservation as ethical determinants explains the ease with which he justifies any compromises which his nation undertakes in foreign policy, however unenlightened that policy be. His arguments as to "responsibility" and "impossibility," as to the use of love to choose between imperfect alternatives, as to supporting the egoism whose interest is nearest to justice, may be used in any country to approve of any foreign policy. We need only observe the disagreements between Niebuhr, Barth, and Bereczky to confirm that this ethical approach does not define the good; it rather finds grounds for calling good any policy which was chosen for other reasons. These three men, with similar ethical theories, justify with almost identical arguments three different positions, each coinciding with the selfish interest and the present policy of his own nation.

(3) This ethical pluralism is possible only when one rejects from the start the belief that God's will can be known and that right action can be identical for all. Niebuhr will recognize as valid any pacifism which agrees to recognize Niebuhr's nonpacifism as equally valid. Thus he supposes that there can be two contradictory positions, both right as long as both are held tolerantly. This must presuppose that there is no one knowable good and that conflicting actions carried on with good intentions or in the awareness of their imperfection are all equally right. It goes without saying that if this is really true there is little point to any talk about ethical considerations.

The most significant objection of all against Niebuhr is however still deeper. His argument that the presence of sin in the world justifies or necessitates an ethic which is no better than enlightened opportunism claims to agree with Christian insights as to the nature of man and of the good. That there is a great degree of agreement between Niebuhr's analysis of man's need and the Bible's must be granted; but it is just as clear that Niebuhr's answer to that need is not the Bible's. For Niebuhr derives his ethics from the fact of man's predicament, and the Bible derives not only ethics, but everything, from the fact of God's redemption. Those Christian doctrines which relate to the redemption are consistently slighted by Niebuhr, transferred to another realm of being, or read as mythological expressions of man's capacities for transcendence.

(1) Although the New Testament understands the cross only in the light of the resurrection, Niebuhr speaks of the cross repeatedly, of the resurrection of Christ not at all, and of the resurrection of the body only as a mythological symbol for the fact that the superhistorical triumph of the good must also somehow involve history. Thus he can consider forgiving grace as central in our relation to our sinfulness, and enabling grace as only a temptation to pride. Whereas the Bible speaks of our "resurrection with Christ" as opening new ethical possibilities, grace is for Niebuhr primarily the way to have peace in spite of our continuing sin.

(2) In the Bible, the bearer of the meaning of history is not the United States of America, nor Western Christendom, but a divine-human society, the church, the body of Christ. In view of Niebuhr's interest in history it is surprising that the concept of the church is quite absent from his thought; when he mentions the word "church" it is only to criticize the medieval synthesis of Catholicism. This omission is highly significant for understanding what is wrong with Niebuhr's social ethics. For the body of Christ differs from other social bodies in that it is not less moral than its individual members. If being a perfectly loyal American, a freemason, or a bourgeois, identifies a man with that group egoism in such a way as to make him less loving than he would be as an individual, the contrary is true of being a member of Christ. Thus the thesis of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* falls down in the crucial case, the only one which is really decisive for Christian ethics.

In addition to being a society better than the sum of its members, the church is also a supernational society. One of the strongest arguments of Christian pacifism is that when churches endorse nationalist aims and Christian kills Christian the greatest possible of-

fense against the unity of the body of Christ takes place. This argument is meaningless for Niebuhr because, despite his participation in the ecumenical movement, the church as distinguished from society has no significant place in his ethical thought.

(3) The Bible teaches that there is a significant difference between the saint and the unbeliever by virtue of a change of motives so basic as to be called a new birth. Niebuhr has no place for the doctrine of regeneration since the saint is for him still a sinner, even though he may be a less offensive one. In addition to what it implies about the possibility of God-pleasing action (already mentioned under 1), the doctrine of regeneration means that ethics for Christians and ethics for unregenerate society are two distinct disciplines. Niebuhr in attempting to construct a Christian ethics for unregenerate society naturally runs into impossible possibilities, prematurely resolved tensions, and other such monsters, but their origin is not in the nature of man nor in the nature of redemption; they result from the illegitimate union of Christian and non-Christian elements.

(4) The common denominator of the above-mentioned doctrines of resurrection, the church, and regeneration is that all are works of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is likewise neglected in Niebuhr's ethics. In the New Testament the coming of the Spirit means the imparting of *power,* and that *power* is not a mythological symbol for the infinite perfectibility of human rationality but rather a working reality within history and especially within the church. This *power* opens a brand-new realm of historic possibilities; not "simple possibilities," but *crucial* possibilities.

The acceptance of the *cross,* i.e., the full cost of utter obedience to the loving nature of God, is the path to the accomplishment in history, not of perfection, but of action which can please God and be useful to men. The triumph of love over sin is not reserved for some Platonic realm (such as Niebuhr's "superhistory") where the eschatological judgment takes place. Sin is vanquished every time a Christian in the power of God chooses the better instead of the good, obedience instead of necessity, love instead of compromise, brotherhood instead of veiled self-interest. No insistence on "maintaining the tension" between the good and the possible, whether derived from systematic considerations or sociological observation, can change this reality. That this triumph over sin is incomplete changes in no way the fact that it is possible, and that if God calls us to deny ourselves, accept suffering, and love our neighbors, that too is possible. This possibility passes by the way of the cross, and therefore

is "foolishness to the Greeks and a scandal to the Jews, but to them that believe it is the wisdom of God and the power of God."

C. Postscript

Before concluding we should remind ourselves of Niebuhr's real service to theology, and to pacifism, in making real the omnipresence of sin, even when mixed with the best of intentions. All our insistence upon the possibility and the relevance of the law of love should not lead us to forget the humiliating fact that we do not obey it, that we are too often selfish and proud, and that if God deigns to tolerate us and use us it is only by His grace.

And, lastly, it must be said that Niebuhr is not as pessimistic in all realms as we have had to portray him here in his dialogue with pacifism. It is thus only fair to close with two hopeful quotations dealing with the belief (which according to Niebuhr's view is illusory) that loving action and the achievement of good in history is a possibility.

> There are no limits to be set in history for the achievement of a more universal brotherhood, for the development of more perfect and more inclusive human relations. All the characteristic hopes and aspirations of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, of both secular and religious liberalism, are right at least in this, that they understand the side of Christian doctrine which regards the *agape* of the kingdom of God as a resource for infinite developments toward a more perfect brotherhood in history.[5] The truest visions of religion are illusions, which may be partly realized by being resolutely believed. For what religion believes to be true is not wholly true but ought to be true; and may become true if its truth is not doubted.[6]

One can hardly avoid feeling that such statements, which belong to Niebuhr's thought just as surely as does his pessimism, would lead him to Christian pacifism if it were not for his un-Biblical assumption of responsibility for policing society and for preserving Western civilization. This way in which a presupposition as to what is to be defended leads him pragmatically to militarist conclusions is a further reminder, valid for Niebuhr as well as for ourselves, that militarists and pacifists share alike the risk of identifying the kingdom of God with a particular social order, a particular strategy, or a particular peace.

5 *The Nature and Destiny of Man* II (New York, 1943), 194, quoted by Muste in *Pacifism and Perfectionism.*

6 *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York, 1932), 81.

THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BEACHY AMISH MENNONITE CHURCHES

ALVIN J. BEACHY*

A. Major Reasons for the 1927 Division

The events which led to the division of 1927 in the (Casselman) River, Pennsylvania, Old Order Amish congregation had their origin in the incidents of 1895 and 1896. After the division of 1895 Bishop Moses D. Yoder, leader of the conservative wing, gained the unanimous consent of his congregation to place under the strict ban all who left to join the Maryland or Miller congregation after a certain date. It has already been noted that Yoder was able to persuade his congregation to take this position only because he either deliberately misrepresented the advice received from Bishop Joseph Witmer through correspondence or grossly misunderstood this advice.

In support of Bishop M. D. Yoder's position it should be said that the weight of earlier tradition, both within the state of Pennsylvania and in Somerset County, was on the side of the strict ban for all who left the Amish to unite with any other denomination. This had been the first article in the Discipline of 1809.[1] In the Discipline of 1837, which was drawn up at a conference consisting only of the ministers of the Amish congregations within Somerset County, the importance of the strict ban as a means of maintaining a vigorous church also receives first place. The conference noted that decline had set in because of the neglect of God's ordinance in the ban, and decided that thereafter the ban should be observed without regard of person whether man or woman.[2] Apparently the ministers who attended the 1837 conference felt that there had been a tendency to be too lenient when cases arose where women became subjects for the strict ban.

There are also references to other Amish ministers' conferences held in Somerset County at which very strict action was taken in regard to receiving members into the Amish Church from other denominations. Jacob Swartzendruber in his epistle addressed to the Amish ministers' conference of 1865 refers to a ministers' confer-

* The present article is a sequel to the previous one by the same author in the October, 1954, *Review*, pp. 263-92, entitled "The Amish Settlement in Somerset County, Pennsylvania." The author completed his study in 1950. Meanwhile the Beachy movement has spread so that in 1955, instead of the twelve congregations with 1,000 baptized members there are at least twenty-one congregations with 1,500 members.—H. S. B.

1 H. S. Bender, "An Amish Bishop's Conference Epistle of 1865," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, VIII (1934), 90.

2 *Ibid.*, 93.

ence held in the Glades, at which Amish ministers from Lancaster County were also present.[3] While no records of this 1830 conference have been found, it is almost certain that in 1830, or perhaps a little earlier, an Amish ministers' conference was held in the Glade congregation, which Amish ministers from Lancaster County also attended. This is known from an autobiography of David Beiler, an Amish minister, who lived in Lancaster County from the time of his birth in 1786 until his death in 1871. Beiler's autobiography was written in 1862. In this he refers to a ministers' conference which was held in the Glades (Klatz) approximately thirty-four years earlier, which would have been around the year 1828.[4] This may be the conference to which Jacob Swartzendruber referred in his 1865 epistle. Herein he mentions Christian Yoder, Sr., whom this study has revealed to have been the first resident Amish bishop of Somerset County and the author of the resolution which forbade the reception of Mennonites into fellowship in the Amish Church unless they were first rebaptized.[5]

Bishop Moses D. Yoder may have been aware of this tradition of strictness among the Amish in the Somerset County of the past and possibly felt that he was contending for the "faith of the fathers" by reinstating the ban in his congregation. Whatever his method or motive may have been, his success was destined to be rather short-lived. He had been ordained as bishop of the Pennsylvania district of the River congregation in 1895, and by 1916 ill health forced him to pass the reins of leadership to a younger and more tolerant man. This was Moses M. Beachy, third son of Bishop Manassa Beachy, who had preceded Yoder as the spiritual leader of the Pennsylvania Amish in the Casselman River region. Moses Beachy had been ordained as a minister in Yoder's congregation in 1912, and four years later was ordained to the office of bishop. Moses D. Yoder now became a sort of "bishop emeritus" until his death in 1927, but the actual leadership of the congregation was in the hands of Bishop M. M. Beachy after 1916.

The storm which had probably been brewing since 1905[6] when R. M. Beachy discovered that Yoder had misinterpreted or misunderstood the advice from Witmer concerning the strict ban broke soon after the new bishop came into power. Fortunately the records of

3 Bender, *op. cit., MQR,* XX (1946), 222.

4 D. Beiler, autobiography, written in 1862 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Now in the Mennonite Historical Library, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio, among the private papers of the late C. Henry Smith.

5 Bender, *op. cit., MQR,* XX (1946), 222.

6 From the file marked "Letters of Importance," found among the personal effects of Bishop M. M. Beachy after his death in 1946, near Salisbury, Pa.

that storm are fairly clear. The incident which brought the storm into the open was the withdrawal of a Mr. and Mrs. John D. Yoder from Bishop Beachy's congregation to the Maryland or Miller congregation, which in 1912 had affiliated with the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference. The couple was called back to a congregational meeting to explain their withdrawal, and gave as their reason the use of the strict ban against those who left to join other churches when there was no other accusation against them.[7] The exact date of their withdrawal is not known, but the first attempt to heal the dispute which arose as a result of their removal was made in 1925. However, the difficulty had existed at least two years prior to the first attempt to resolve the differences.

A letter written on April 19, 1923, by Bishop J. F. Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa, to Bishop M. M. Beachy reveals that the latter had previously written to Swartzendruber in the same month for advice on how to deal with the troublesome situation. It also reveals that Beachy had written to Swartzendruber before this, and that on the first inquiry the latter evaded the question.[8] In the letter of April 19 Swartzendruber explains that his reason for evading the question earlier was the unanimous vote of the congregation, secured while M. D. Yoder was bishop, to place under the strict ban all who left to join the Maryland or Miller congregation. Swartzendruber knew his Mennonite and Amish history well enough to know that the strict ban had been the cause of much strife during the days of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. He contends in this letter that Article 16 of the Dordrecht Confession intended to do away with the avoidance of those whose only offense was going to another faction. Swartzendruber states in this letter that, so far as he knew from the study of history, the use of the strict ban against those whose only offense was to join another denomination had always brought failure and havoc wherever tried.[9] The fact that Bishop Beachy's congregation had formerly voted unanimously to place under the strict ban all who left to join the Maryland congregation troubled Swartzendruber and he did not see how this earlier vote of the congregation could be entirely set aside. It had, he felt, been the vote of a group of believers who were obeying their conscience. But Swartzendruber was also aware that one's conscience may change over a period of

7 M. J. Yoder, memoranda on the division of 1927, Meyersdale, Pa., p 1. Made available to the writer through the courtesy of Mr. Yoder in July, 1949. In 1950 this was published as "Facts Concerning the Beachy A.M. Division."

8 J. F. Swartzendruber, letter dated April 19, 1923, Kalona, Iowa. With the "Letters of Importance" found among the personal effects of M. M. Beachy after his death in 1946, and made available to the writer by Milton M. Beachy of Salisbury, Pa.

9 *Ibid.*

years, and the advice which he gave to M. M. Beachy on a page attached to the letter of April, 1923, is a fine combination of Christian charity and common sense. A full copy of the attached sheet is here included for that reason.

True Christian love, charity, and forbearance demands of us that we respect and regard our neighbors' rights, conscience, and convictions as much as our own; and yet our conscience is not infallible, it is as much as we are taught or educated; if this teaching is infallible then our conscience is—and only then is it a safe dictator to follow, but everybody believes himself to be right, and will sometimes change theories and convictions.

Now this being the case, I think a safe and sane way would be to give the liberty and let each one follow the dictates of his or her own conscience; letting those that think they would do wrong if they would not avoid them, avoid them, and on the other hand, those that feel that they did wrong if they did avoid them; do not insist that they should.

Be patient and bear one with another, come together and commune together, and give the Holy Spirit a chance to educate and work in our hearts, bring us closer together, as we grow in grace and knowledge in the will of the Lord.

If I understand that unanimous voice of the church, this would not interfere with it at all, since they all agreed to it, but there was no provision made whatever, if they should change their convictions which is likely to occur with the best of us.

Now, dear brother, you may not be able to hold the church together by following the above method, but if you take this stand you can feel that you did your duty in trying to compromise. Compromising is not always best, but in this case it would be, and is the only thing that will hold the church together.

I well know you are in close quarters, and to do this you must take a firm stand, be easy, mild, and loving. By all means do not use harsh words and expressions, trying with the help of God to be an example of mildness, forbearance, meekness, and humility; and induce the members to the same.

Matters may look dark to you and I take from your letter that you fear you would not accomplish much. It is right that this feeling should come; but I think with the above plan you can feel yourself on safe ground and on the Lord's side, and if the church has not drifted away from God too far through selfishness, the Lord will bless your efforts, and may work wonders which will surprise you. Let the Lord do it and only use you as an instrument in His hand.[10]

As time went on and the local ministers were unable to resolve this dispute themselves, Amish ministers from other localities were called in to help solve the difficulty, namely, Ben Beiler and Gideon Stoltzfus from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Eli J. Bontrager from Shipshewana, Indiana, and Joseph Schrock from Arthur, Illinois. These four men came to Somerset County sometime during the year 1925 at the request of Bishop M. M. Beachy and his cominsters,

10 *Ibid.*

Noah M. Yoder and Joseph J. Yoder. Two of these four men, Stoltzfus and Schrock, have since died,[11] and Beiler is presumably dead, as letters addressed to him have brought no reply. Bishop Bontrager, however, is alive and working actively in the Old Order Amish Church in Lagrange County, Indiana. An extant letter which he wrote to D. J. Swartzendruber of Oakland, Maryland, in either 1926 or 1927 clearly indicated the advice that was given to the Somerset County Amish by these four men on their 1925 visit. In this letter to Swartzendruber Bontrager says that he had received

> quite a long letter from A. M. Beachy (at that time a minister in the River congregation) some time ago in which he stated that he rather thinks we would be called back to make our work or advice plain, as there seemed to be some misunderstanding.[12]

Bontrager then goes on to say that he can hardly see how their advice could have been misunderstood, though he supposes that they could have made it plainer. He informs Swartzendruber that he is sure the four men who were called were all agreed that a blanket ban for all who left the Pennsylvania congregation to join the Maryland congregation was no longer workable. Their counsel, he says, was to consider each case separately, and then decide what should be done in a particular case, rather than to abide by one ruling which was to be applied in every case. This advice was to be carried out in the following four steps:

1. In every case that arises which seems to need attention, the ministers should first confer with each other to see if it is their judgment that something should be done.

2. If the ministers themselves think something should be done, then they should first come to a decision among themselves as to what that action should be.

3. Only after the ministers have agreed among themselves should they bring a particular case before the congregation, with their own decision or opinion regarded as a recommendation for the course of action taken by the congregation.

4. If the ministers themselves cannot agree, nothing should be said to the congregation, such lack of agreement among the ministers probably indicating that the case was not serious enough to demand the attention of the entire congregation.[13]

11 E. J. Bontrager, *op. cit.*, dated March 2, 1950.

12 E. J. Bontrager, letter found in file marked "Letters of Importance" among personal effects of M. M. Beachy after his death in 1946. This letter is a copy of the original and bears no date, but Bontrager in a letter of Aug. 29, 1951, confirmed himself as the writer in '26 or '27.

13 *Ibid.*

Bontrager and the other three ministers were apparently aware of the earlier unanimous vote of the congregation to place under the ban all who left to join the Maryland congregation; and they were also troubled by it. They were aware that the four steps of procedure as outlined above might possibly mean some deviation from the method prescribed by the unanimous vote obtained while Moses D. Yoder was still bishop; but they refused to accept any responsibility for the changes that might occur, as the following lines from the letter plainly show:

> We said that we would not want to give them an opinion with any certain cases, or change their ways of dealing or deciding certain cases. But to take all cases as I have outlined above, and naturally by proceeding like that, it may automatically change some of their foregone conclusions in such matters as their former way of dealing with such as choose to worship with some other congregation. But in case they agreed to deal with such cases as they formerly did no change will be made. And that is what we meant by not changing it. But if by dealing with the cases as we have advised, they come to a different decision than formerly or cannot decide to make a decision at all, that will change it. But we will not. We leave it to them.[14]

Thus the advice given to the Somerset County, Pennsylvania, Amish by these four visiting brethren was very similar to that given to Bishop M. M. Beachy by J. F. Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa, in his letter of April 19, 1923. Later events prove that the course outlined by the advice received from these two quarters was the course which M. M. Beachy tried to follow in clearing up the difficulties that had arisen in connection with the "John D. Yoder Case," as it came to be known. However, he was prevented from following this course of action by his coministers, Noah M. Yoder and Joseph J. Yoder, who were inclined to favor the strict position of the "Bishop emeritus" Moses D. Yoder. These men wanted Mr. and Mrs. John Yoder to be placed under the strict ban, but as the congregation refused to give its unanimous consent, Bishop Beachy refused to comply with their request.[15]

In his letter of 1926 or 1927 to D. J. Swartzendruber of Oakland, Maryland, E. J. Bontrager quotes A. M. Beachy as saying that Noah M. Yoder insisted that the advice of the four visiting ministers had been to deal with those who left to join other congregations exactly as they had before, i.e., place them under the strict ban, and that to do differently they would need the unanimous vote of the congregation. Bontrager says, "It never occurred to me that any one could so construe this."[16]

14 *Ibid.*
15 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 1.
16 E. J. Bontrager, letter, *op. cit.*, dated 1926 or 1927.

Bishop Beachy tried for a full year to win his fellowministers to the more tolerant view outlined in the J. F. Swartzendruber letter and to that given in the advice of the four visiting brethren. When he finally saw that his cominister intended to be as unyielding as Jacob Ammann himself had been, he decided to proceed as the congregation had been advised to, without the consent of Noah Yoder and Joseph Yoder or of Moses D. Yoder. On October 31, 1926, he made known his decision to the congregation.[17] Fortunately a summary of what he said on that date, as well as the reaction of his fellow ministers to his intended course of action, has been preserved. That summary is included here with such editing as seemed necessary for the clear conveyance of the thought contained in the original for those not familiar with Pennsylvania German idioms.

On October 31, 1926, Mose took the privilege to state how he intended to "keep house" (see footnote) or lead the church. He stated that he was blamed very much for not punishing the disobedient, and that he knew many things had gotten into the church during M. D. Yoder's time which were not permitted earlier; and that the same was true during his father's and Joel Beachy's time as bishops. He also stated that M. D. Yoder did not punish one party that he knows of and wondered why allowing some things to go unpunished was so much worse than it had been previously. He also said that in his father's time as well as before there were some prohibitions that were not obeyed, but the offenders went unpunished. He said the men who were called to deal with the John D. Yoder case refused to touch it and he calls the case closed. Why not leave it to them and to God in regard to changing churches, he asked, rather than to place them under the ban and still leave it to them and to God, since we have no direct Scripture for such action? He said that he would try to keep the church in order so far as other ordinances were concerned, and that now was as good a time as any for those who had things that were forbidden to get rid of them. He did not elaborate on what these were but mentioned that some of the men were cutting their hair rather short, and that the women were wearing short fringes on their bonnets. He said that things which were just as good one way as another, we should keep as we had them before. He said that in these trying times he thought it best not to impose severe punishment upon anyone, and that Eli Bontrager had told him and L. M. Beachy that they would cause a split in the church unless they allowed the John D. Yoder case to drop. Mose said he would rather be a little too easy than to punish without a right to do so and drive people away from the church. He said he wonders how many who were members of the church would be worthy of keeping under the ban those who left, if they examined their own lives closely. He said that he thought we should be careful and that the other ministers might express themselves if they wished.[18]

17 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 1.

18 *Ibid.*, 2. An Amish bishop is frequently referred to as the "householder" or "housefather." Note: The ministers' counsel meeting or "Abrath" is an integral part of every worship service. While the congregation sings hymns, the ministers retire to a separate room and there plan the order of service for the day.

The reaction of Bishop Beachy's cominister to the above proposal was decidedly in the negative. M. D. Yoder, who by this time was very feeble, simply stated that he did not understand the proposal. Noah M. Yoder, who was the son of M. D. Yoder, stated that in his opinion Bishop Beachy was far from following the instructions of the four visiting ministers by bringing this matter before the congregation. He also said that he had not known that the presiding bishop intended to bring the matter before the congregation, and that he did not know what he himself should say. He said that the congregation probably thought that the ministers had counseled over the matter and were in agreement with the procedure as outlined by the bishop, which was not the case.

Bishop Beachy then asked N. M. Yoder not to say that he did not know the matter was to be brought before the congregation, since he had told them during the time the ministers were in the council room on that very day (see footnote). Under questioning from Bishop Beachy, N. M. Yoder then admitted that this was true. Joseph J. Yoder then said that the visiting brethren had been hindered from doing anything with the Yoder case while they were present. Bishop Beachy replied that he had insisted that the visiting ministers should first clear up that case, and that thereafter he would be willing to consider anything necessary for the peace and progress of the church. When the visiting brethren refused to commit themselves on the John D. Yoder case, Bishop Beachy refused to allow any other matters to come up for consideration.[19]

Noah M. Yoder was right when he insisted that the presiding bishop was not acting in accord with the advice of the brethren Beiler, Bontrager, Schrock, and Stoltzfus by presenting his view to the congregation. Beachy must have known his cominister well enough by that time to realize that they would never agree to his proposals. His announcement to the ministers as to what he intended to tell the congregation on October 31, 1926, seems to have been in the nature of a declaration of intended action, rather than an attempt to gain a unified approach.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that Beachy's coministers, by their refusal to compromise, had driven him into a corner where he had either to accept the decision which the congregation had made while M. D. Yoder was bishop or to strike out in a new direction. His decision to appeal directly to the congregation was therefore not hasty or ill considered, but rather the action

19 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 2. Note: A counsel meeting consists only of those who are baptized members and is usually held after a worship service.

of a man who refused to be maneuvered into a position where his own conduct, as well as that of his congregation, should be determined by a decision of the past which time had proved unwise.

At the conclusion of the October, 1926, meeting Bishop M. M. Beachy announced that after the next church service, which was to be held in the Flag Run meetinghouse on November 14, there would be a counsel meeting (see footnote) of the members to decide whether or not the congregation should hold a communion service. C. J. Swartzendruber from Kempsville, Virginia, and D. J. Swartzendruber from Oakland, Maryland, were the visiting ministers at the November 14 service to assist in the conduct of the counsel meeting. At the close of the church service, after those who were not yet members of the congregation had been dismissed, Bishop Beachy again addressed himself to the congregation.

> He mentioned many things as he outlined to the congregation the manner in which he intended to "keep house." He again mentioned that some men were cutting their hair too short, and that some of the women were wearing gloves in the summer time. He said that these things had been prohibited before and that they should remain so now. He said that since the automobile would draw the line with the Old Order churches he could not allow them, nor short dresses and waists among the women of the congregation. Women's shawls, however, which had previously been worn in three-cornered style, might now be worn four-cornered, since that would not interfere with their fellowship with the Old Order churches.
>
> After Mose had thus expressed himself to the membership, the vote was taken on whether or not they wished to observe the communion service. But before the vote was taken Mose again told the members that he did not intend to place Mr. and Mrs. John D. Yoder under the ban, and that the people must use their own judgment in their attitude toward the Yoders. He said that so far as he was concerned they had the liberty to unite with the other church if they cared to do so.[20]

To the proposed course of action as outlined by Bishop Beachy above, Noah Yoder and Joseph Yoder would not agree. Joseph Yoder intimated that he thought there were other issues than the use of the strict ban which should be investigated before going ahead with the communion service. Under the circumstances he said that he felt it would be wrong to continue with plans for the Lord's Supper, and he was supported in his position by Noah M. Yoder. Despite the non-co-operative attitude of his cominister, Bishop Beachy proceeded to take the vote of the congregation on whether or not they wished that a communion service should be observed. Ten of the brethren said that under the circumstances they would not participate. Thirteen of the brethren said they were neutral on

20 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 2.

the question, and twenty-one of the brethren expressed a desire for the communion service. Among the women there was no objection whatever to holding the communion service as proposed by the bishop.[21]

Though a clear majority of the congregation had expressed themselves in favor of the communion service, no service was announced by the bishop for the fall of 1926. The stalemate was allowed to continue until the following spring. Then on April 3, 1927, at a counsel meeting held after a worship service in the Flag Run meetinghouse, Bishop M. M. Beachy reiterated what he had said earlier in regard to how he thought he ought to "keep house." At this meeting the vote of the membership was not taken nor was there any announcement of the communion service. One week later, on April 10, 1927, an additional church service was held at the Summit Mills meetinghouse, and at that service communion was announced for Sunday, April 17, at the same place. When the worshipers came together for this occasion, they were prevented from observing the Lord's Supper as had been announced because of dissatisfaction among the group, notably those who still wanted the strict ban applied to all who left to join the Maryland or Miller congregation. However, Bishop Beachy announced that on the following Sunday, April 24, 1927, a communion service would be held at the Flag Run meetinghouse. When this service was finally held, only sixty-three members participated or slightly more than half of the membership.[22]

B. Minor Reasons for the Division

From the presentation of the foregoing events it is clearly evident that the major reason for the differences that finally led to division was the insistence of Joseph and Noah Yoder that the strict ban be used on all who left to unite with the Maryland congregation. This is true also in the opinion of Eli J. Bontrager, who says in a letter of March 2, 1950,

> As it was some twenty-five years ago that we were called to Somerset County, matters seem a bit hazy now. However, I think your informant was right that the *real* cause of the trouble was the strict ban.[23]

There were, however, minor differences which came into the open only after the communion service of April 24, 1927. Possibly Bishop Beachy felt that the opposition had indicated by their absence that they had no intention of compromising their views on

21 *Ibid.*, 3.
22 *Ibid.*, 11.
23 E. J. Bontrager, letter, *op. cit.*, March 2, 1950.

the strict ban. Thereafter he apparently gave up hope of a reconciliation and allowed some innovations which he had previously tried to hold in check.

At the meeting held on November 14, 1926, which was held in the Flag Run meetinghouse, the bishop was still trying to keep his congregation in full fellowship with the Old Order Amish churches and stated that he could not permit the use of automobiles, because that would alienate the Old Order group.[24] After April, 1927, he abandoned this idea. Now some of the other issues emerge that had been constantly in the background but which had not previously been discussed. Bontrager in the letter referred to above also says, "To say that the ban was the real or only cause of the division is probably not quite correct."[25] He states further that when the four ministers, Beiler, Bontrager, Schrock, and Stoltzfus, were in Somerset County, Noah M. Yoder had intimated to him that there were other issues besides the strict ban, but that what they were did not become clear to him until after the split, and that in his opinion what N. M. Yoder wished to convey was this: that M. M. Beachy wanted unrestricted use of electricity, automobiles, and perhaps a few other things.[26] This is also the opinion of Bishop Joseph J. Yoder of Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, who says in a letter of March 3, 1950,

> According to my estimation and knowledge by going through that sorrowful split, the best I can give as the cause of it was that the more liberal class was dissatisfied with the former church rules, in not only one matter or other, but in a number of different affairs wanted more liberty, until it came to a split; and the changes made at that time and since is plain evidence of the cause.[27]

Probably neither Bontrager nor Yoder is quite fair in saying that Beachy wanted unrestricted use of electricity and the automobile prior to the communion service of 1927. After that date, however, innovations occurred in Bishop Beachy's congregation with such swiftness that it seems incredible to suppose they had not been under contemplation by some of his members beforehand.

1. The Organization of Sunday School

The first of these innovations was the organization of a Sunday school. On May 8, 1927, just a little more than a month after the April communion service, Bishop Beachy and his followers had a meeting at the Flag Run meetinghouse for the specific purpose of organizing a Sunday school.[28] The fact that many of the youth were

24 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 2.
25 E. J. Bontrager, letter, *op. cit.*, March 2, 1950.
26 *Ibid.*
27 J. J. Yoder, letter, March 3, 1950, Meyersdale, Pa.
28 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 11.

without a reading knowledge of German had long been a matter of concern to Moses M. Beachy. He reasoned rightly that the German language would have to be abandoned in the Amish worship service if the young were not instructed therein, and this was his chief reason for wanting to start the school. When the Sunday school was first started, it was held on Sunday afternoon, but the meetings were quickly shifted to the forenoon of the alternate Sundays on which no church service was held except on special occasions. By May 22, 1927, this had become the established practice at both the Summit Mills and Flag Run meetinghouses, and has remained so since that time.

2. The Introduction of Electricity

The exact date on which Bishop Beachy gave his official consent to the use of electric lights and motors by the members of his congregation is not known. At the counsel meeting held in the Summit Mills meetinghouse on November 28, 1926, Beachy had told the congregation that he and Gideon Brenneman, (later a minister in the conservative wing), had had some trouble about electric lights and motors, but that this disagreement had been settled.[29] Nothing is said as to the manner in which this disagreement was settled, but the very fact that it was mentioned as early as 1926 indicates that by that time some members of the congregation had begun to make use of these modern conveniences. Among these was Bishop Beachy's son, Noah M. Beachy, whose house had been wired for electricity by a former owner and who used an electric motor to drive his domestic water pump.[30]

Since no date can be found when official permission was given for the use of these conveniences, [31] it is presumed that they came into use shortly after the Sunday schools were an established fact. At least the use of electrical conveniences was the second of the innovations practiced by the "Beachy congregation," as it was later known.

3. Automobiles Allowed

The reader will recall that at the November 14, 1926, meeting Bishop Beachy had specifically stated that he could not permit the use of the automobile, as that would alienate the Old Order Amish churches from his congregation. This would indicate that while

29 *Ibid.*, 3.

30 From the writer's memories of boyhood days.

31 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 12. Yoder in his memoirs after the summer of 1927 writes: "I made no notations of events in the church for several years; I do not remember the date we took the voice of the church to allow electric lights. Mose said the things we need for our welfare should be our guide, and the ministers should be reasonable in their dealing."

automobiles were not generally owned by members of the congregation in 1926, there was at least some agitation that they should be permitted to own them. On June 26, 1927, at a counsel meeting held at the Summit Mills meetinghouse, the members were asked if they were willing to do without automobiles for the present, and a majority indicated that they were. But by August of the same year this agitation had taken the form of open rebellion. Yoder's memoirs reveal that on August 21, 1927,

> They asked a few of the brethren to agree to put away their cars and not make trouble all the time. One did not agree to this whereupon they gave him two weeks to think it over.[32]

From the above it can be seen that by August, 1927, there was more than one automobile in the possession of those who were members of Beachy's congregation, and one brother was not at once willing to dispose of this modern method of transportation. Whether the congregation succeeded in persuading him to put away his horseless carriage within the next two weeks is not known. In any case he had only to wait a little more than a year until the horseless carriage was no longer taboo for any member of the "Beachy congregation." Sometime during the month of February, 1929, the congregation voted unanimously to allow the use of the automobile to its members.[33]

C. The Division Completed

If developments were rapid among the followers of Beachy after April 24, 1927, they were no less so among the followers of Joseph and Noah Yoder. These two men called in Amish ministers from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and Holmes County, Ohio, namely Ben Beiler and Gideon Stoltzfus from Lancaster County, and Abraham Yoder and Jacob Stutzman from Holmes County. They held services in the home of Amos J. Yoder near Springs, Pennsylvania, but most of Beachy's followers were not present at this meeting, and he himself was away on a trip to the West.

At the close of the service Abraham Yoder asked the members to remain seated while the ministers retired to a separate room. The members were then asked to come to this room one at a time and express their dissatisfaction with Bishop Beachy's leadership. However, since the meeting had either not been generally announced or perhaps because Beachy and his followers deliberately absented themselves, the visiting ministers could get only one side of the dis-

32 *Ibid.*, 12.

33 *Ibid.*, 12. Note: J. B. Mast, editor of the published memoranda, gives the date as December, 1928, but the writer is of the opinion that the later date is correct.

pute. They then called another meeting for Friday afternoon of the same week and requested Samuel E. Hershberger and Edward Yoder, two of Beachy's loyal members, to be present.[34]

These two men were called into counsel at separate times by the four visiting ministers and asked to give their views on the dispute. Death has sealed the lips of Edward Yoder, and twenty years of time have dimmed the memory of Samuel Hershberger so that he says,

> I would be unable at present to say just what the questions were, or what answers were given. I remember quite well that I told them about forty of the members were not present at their meeting.[35]

While it has not been possible to get behind the scenes to discover what actually happened at that Friday afternoon meeting at the Amos Yoder home, it is known that the Yoder ministers were advised by the visiting brethren not to withdraw from Beachy's leadership immediately. Following this meeting three of the visiting ministers returned to their homes, leaving only Abraham Yoder of Holmes County, Ohio, to assist this conservative group.

On June 2, 1927, a church service was held for Abraham Yoder and also Harry Maust, an Amish minister from Arthur, Illinois, who chanced to be passing through the community. At this service members from both of the disputing sides were again present. But four weeks later, on June 26, 1927, Noah M. and Joseph J. Yoder decided to ignore the advice of the visiting ministers and held an independent worship service in the Summit Mills meetinghouse on the very day Bishop Beachy had announced that the service would be held in the Flag Run meetinghouse. The Yoder ministers took this action on the very date that Beachy's congregation voted by majority to do without the automobiles for the present, which shows that at that time Beachy was still trying to effect a reconciliation.[36]

It appears then that Noah M. and Joseph J. Yoder must bear much of the responsibility for the final division. It was they who with their followers withdrew and not Beachy who expelled them. Furthermore, their withdrawal came at a time when Beachy was still in the mood to compromise on the use of automobiles. Perhaps, however, the attempt to fix responsibility for past events is useless. In any case, after June 27, 1927, the break between the two opposing factions was complete.

The Amish colony which had been planted in the Casselman River region, perhaps as early as 1768, was now divided into three separate units, where prior to 1895 there had been only one. Jacob

34 *Ibid.*, 11.
35 S. E. Hershberger, letter dated Dec. 30, 1949, Grantsville, Md.
36 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 11.

Ammann, though he had long been dead, yet spoke. His strict teaching on the ban, and the attempt of the Yoders and their followers to enforce it, were the chief causes of the 1927 division.

D. The Influence of the Beachy Amish Congregation upon the Old Order Amish Churches

1. The Immediate Effect in the Local Community

Due to the manner in which the worship services of the Somerset County Amish had been conducted prior to the division of 1927, the after effects of the division were not at once so apparent as one might suppose. There were two meetinghouses in the area, and the pattern of holding worship services on alternate Sundays only, meant that as a rule the meetinghouses were used just once a month. Noah M. and Joseph J. Yoder simply announced that their group would meet in the Summit Mills meetinghouse on the same day that Beachy had announced services in the Flag Run meetinghouse; and by this procedure they set the pattern which has prevailed since that time. The two divergent groups continue to this day to use the same meetinghouses, but never do they meet together in the same meetinghouse on a given Sunday. The Beachy congregation continues to use both meetinghouses for Sunday school on alternate Sundays, while the "Yoder congregation," as it is now known, persists in the old tradition of a church service once every two weeks, with the alternate Sundays free for visiting friends. Amish families usually visit their neighbors on these alternate Sundays.

Disputes of such long duration, however, are not engaged in without leaving some scars. In some instances the division in the church also divided families, and as usual the accusations were many and bitter. Gradually, however, relations between the two groups became less strained, and they now live side by side, perhaps more harmoniously than before the actual division took place. Bishop Joseph J. Yoder in his letter of March 3, 1950, was reluctant to discuss the issues of the 1927 division, lest some of the old ill feeling should be aroused thereby.

In numerical strength the two congregations are now about equal. In 1950 the congregation which is now led by Bishop Yoder consisted of fifty-three families with a total of 154 communicant members,[37] while the Beachy congregation of which Eli D. Tice of Grantsville, Maryland, is now bishop consisted of forty-four families with 155 communicant members.[38] The present (1950) ministers of

37 J. J. Yoder, letter, *op. cit.*, March 2, 1950.
38 M. J. Yoder, letter, May 5, 1951, Meyersdale, Pa.

the Yoder congregation are Bennie A. Fisher, ordained in May, 1928, Noah J. Yoder, son of Joseph J. Yoder, ordained in May, 1940, and Joseph J. Yoder, ordained as minister in May of 1915 and as bishop of the Yoder congregation on October 13, 1929.[39]

2. The Effect in Other Old Order Amish Communities

It was in those Amish communities which lay far beyond the boundaries of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, that the movement started by Bishop M. M. Beachy in 1927 was destined to make its deepest impressions. At first glance it seems strange that Beachy and those who shared his views should not simply have transferred their membership to the Maryland congregation, but for most of them this represented too radical a change. By 1927 the Maryland congregation had undergone a considerable transformation compared to what it had been in 1895 when the original division took place. The men were permitted to wear barbershop haircuts if they wished, and most of the younger men in the congregation were clean shaven. Though German was still in use, there were also sermons in English at almost every worship service.

In 1927 all the married men in Beachy's congregation were wearing the traditional Amish haircut and the full beard. German was the only language used in preaching except at funerals, and all singing was in German and in unison. To have abandoned all this at once would have seemed sacrilegious to most of the people. So Beachy and his followers worked out a sort of middle way, in which they retained most of the former modes of dress, even though the use of the automobiles and electrical appliances were now permitted. Also the German language and unison singing were maintained in the worship services of the church. Those who bought cars were asked to paint them black if they were not already so. Young men were requested to let their beards grow after marriage, and the German language continued to be the accepted medium of worship at all except the funeral services. In fact, the ministers of the Beachy congregation appear to have been more watchful than before for manifestations of worldly pride in personal apparel and home decorating. A letter written by Norman Beachy, a minister from Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, to Bishop M. M. Beachy in May, 1935, is interesting in this connection. The letter says,

> There is a new style coming in with window curtains parted in the middle, which used to be forbidden, and I see no reason why we should allow them now.[40]

39 J. J. Yoder, letter, *op. cit.*, March 2, 1950.
40 N. M. Beachy, letter dated May 31, 1935, Meyersdale, Pa. With the "Letters of Importance" found in the file of M. M. Beachy after his death in 1946.

By being thus watchful lest the use of modern conveniences bring more compromise with the "worldly" styles in dress, Bishop Beachy and his congregation built a bridge over which other dissatisfied Amish groups could walk to greater freedom without having to make so drastic a change as to kill the spirit of initiative before the first step was taken. It should be added here that neither Bishop Beachy nor his followers foresaw the results of their course of action in 1927, nor did they deliberately plan it in order to attract other Amish groups. The several Amish congregations that are now known as the Beachy Amish Mennonite churches appealed to Bishop Beachy for help spontaneously and unsolicited.

After the 1927 division the Beachy congregation was an isolated group, cut off from fellowship with Old Order Amish churches in other areas. It had no relations with any other Amish congregations for a period of about three years. Within that length of time the news that there was an Amish group in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, which permitted the use of the automobile and electrical appliances, had Sunday school, but retained the German language and much of the traditional Amish style in nonconformity of dress, had traveled into other Amish communities.

The first Amish group to make contact with the Beachy congregation in Somerset County was the group led by Bishop John A. Stoltzfus from Bird in Hand, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The followers of Stoltzfus had formerly belonged to a group of Amish in Lancaster County who were known as the "King People," so named because their leading bishop was a man by the name of Isaac King. King and his followers had broken away from the strict Old Order Amish in Lancaster County on the question of the ban and the use of electrical conveniences in the home, but they retained the horse and buggy as the approved means of transportation and also continued the practice of holding their worship services in the homes of the various members.

Bishop Stoltzfus and his group now allowed the use of the automobile and purchased an abandoned Church of the Brethren meetinghouse near Weavertown, Pennsylvania, in which their worship services have since been held. Because of the location of their meetinghouse this group is now known as the Weavertown congregation.[41] Only after the Beachy and Weavertown congregations had become independent did they learn of each other's existence. A sort of alliance soon developed between the two congregations, and by

41 C. G. Baughman, "The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County," *Pennsylvania German Society*, Norristown, Pa., XLIX (1942), 283-85.

1930 frequent visits were exchanged by both ministers and lay people of the two communities.[42]

These two congregations then remained alone until nearly eight years later when a group of Amish people in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, became dissatisfied with the Old Order Amish and withdrew to form a separate congregation.[43] This group had received some help from Bishop John A. Stoltzfus of the Weavertown congregation before 1937. However, during 1937 and 1938 because of illness in the home, Bishop Stoltzfus was unable to absent himself from home for long periods of time, and consequently the Mercer County (or Cochranton) congregation called upon Bishop M. M. Beachy for help. He performed three wedding ceremonies for members of this congregation, the last one on May 12, 1938. On May 13, 1938, he assisted in an ordination of Valentine Yoder, the present bishop of the Cochranton congregation, to that office. In 1950 this congregation had sixty communicant members in which twenty-five families were represented.[44]

One month after the ordination of Valentine Yoder, M. M. Beachy and his cominister were requested to come to Madison County, Ohio, to assist a small Amish group who had become dissatisfied with the Old Order Amish Church of that area. They first traveled to Madison County, Ohio, on June 3, 1938, where they organized a small congregation in the vicinity of Plain City, Ohio. Since there were no ordained ministers among this group, the Somerset County ministers periodically drove to Ohio to conduct worship services for the newly formed congregation until October 11, 1938.[45] On the eleventh day of that month M. M. Beachy ordained two young men from the local congregation as ministers, Emery Yutzy and Robert M. Kaufman, both from the vicinity of Plain City, Ohio.[46] This group was without a resident bishop until April 25, 1949, when Elden L. Troyer was ordained to that office.[47] In 1950 there were fifty-eight communicant members in this congregation, in which approximately twenty-five families were represented.[48]

By the fall of 1939 the knowledge that the Beachy congregation in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, was willing to help other groups if requested to do so had traveled as far as Miami and Howard counties, Indiana. In the fall of that year M. M. Beachy assisted a small

42 M. J. Yoder, letter, March 27, 1950, Meyersdale, Pa.
43 *Ibid.*
44 V. P. Yoder, letter, April 23, 1950, Cochranton, Pa.
45 M. J. Yoder, memoranda, *op. cit.*, 12.
46 E. L. Troyer, letter, May 1, 1950, Plain City, Ohio.
47 M. J. Yoder, letter, *op. cit.*, March 27, 1950.
48 E. L. Troyer, letter, *op. cit.*

group in Miami County in forming a congregation. Several years before this date the Conservative Amish Mennonites had organized a congregation in this area, which soon after ceased to exist. It had, however, existed long enough to ordain a minister, and when the congregation disintegrated the minister was left without a charge. This minister, Levi Sommers from Amboy, Indiana, affiliated with the newly formed Beachy Amish congregation, and was given charge of the group in the summer of 1940. This congregation was without a resident bishop until May 8, 1949, when Ezra Miller of Amboy was ordained to that office. In 1950 the congregation had forty-nine communicant members in which nineteen families were represented.[49]

Approximately one year later an Amish congregation located within the vicinity of Kempsville, Virginia, affiliated with the growing number of Beachy Amish congregations. This congregation had been started about the turn of the century, and many of the first Amish there had come from the River congregation in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. In 1940 a struggle over the ownership of automobiles, which had long been brewing, was resolved when most of the older or original settlers who were objecting to the automobiles moved farther north to the vicinity of Staunton, Virginia. This virtually left the newcomers in power in the old colony, and they lost no time in seeking affiliation with the Beachy Amish congregations. Repeated requests for information as to the size of the congregation have remained unanswered.

In April, 1940, Beachy Amish congregations were again spreading westward. At that time Bishop D. O. Burkholder, who had been ordained as a minister and bishop in the Old Order Amish Church near Nappanee, Indiana, became dissatisfied and withdrew from the group. Several attempts were made by Burkholder and the other Old Order ministers of the area to gain a reconciliation. At Burkholder's request the ministers of the Beachy Amish congregation in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, were present when the third and final attempt was made. It developed that this attempt was vain. The Old Order ministers withdrew from the conference table and on April 28, 1940, silenced D. O. Burkholder, that is, they forbade him any longer to preach in the Old Order Amish Church. The Old Order ministers took this action without the full knowledge or consent of their congregations.[50]

Once the Old Order ministers had thus disposed of Burkholder, he was free to pursue his own course, and this he did speedily. M. M.

49 E. Miller, letter, May 4, 1950, Amboy, Ind.
50 D. O. Burkholder, personal interview granted to the writer in October, 1950, at Nappanee, Ind.

Beachy reinstated him in the ministry, and he and his followers started an independent Amish congregation in the midst of the Old Order Amish stronghold. Burkholder's followers built a meetinghouse about one and one-half miles northwest of Nappanee, Indiana, and in 1950 this congregation had a membership of sixty-seven in which nearly twenty-three families were represented.[51]

By 1941 the Beachy Amish were again making their influence felt in Ohio, this time in Holmes County. Services were first held there in 1941 with the help of Bishop M. M. Beachy. Abner Schlabach, who had been ordained a minister in the Old Order Amish Church in Holmes County, served the new congregation as minister until the time of his death in 1948. After his death the congregation was without a minister for a full year but received some assistance from a Beachy Amish congregation in Stark County, Ohio, which had been organized in June of 1947.[52] In the fall of 1949 Bishop Eli D. Tice, successor to Bishop M. M. Beachy, ordained Jeremiah Schlabach as minister in the Holmes County, Ohio, congregation. A short time later he had as cominister Tobe J. Byler, a former Old Order Amish minister in Holmes County, who affiliated with this Beachy Amish congregation located at Bunker Hill near Berlin, Ohio. In 1950 this group consisted of eighteen families in which there was found a total of ninety children. The congregation at that time was without a resident bishop.[53]

After 1941 there was a period of five years when no new congregations were organized. Then in January, 1946, David Bontrager, a young Amishman, and his wife, living near Middlebury, Indiana, became dissatisfied with the Old Order Amish church in that vicinity and affiliated with D. O. Burkholder's group near Nappanee, Indiana, about twenty-five miles southwest of their home. They continued to attend services at the Nappanee meetinghouse until Ascension Day, 1947, when fifteen other Amish families living in the vicinity of Middlebury decided to have services in their own homes. There was no ordained minister in this group, and Bishop D. O. Burkholder and his cominister from Nappanee preached and held communion services for these fifteen families. In the summer of 1947 this group, which then consisted of thirteen families (two apparently returned to the Old Order Amish), decided to build a meetinghouse in their own community. This structure was built about five and one-half miles east of Goshen at a cost of approximately $10,000. The first service was held on November 7, 1947. About

51 *Ibid.*
52 S. J. Otto, letter, Aug. 1, 1951, Canton, Ohio.
53 J. Schlabach, letter, May 2, 1950, Fredericksburg, Ohio.

one month earlier David O. Bontrager, the young Amishman who with his wife had joined the Nappanee congregation in 1946, was ordained as the bishop of this area by D. O. Burkholder at the relatively young age of thirty-one. In 1950 this congregation had ninety-five communicant members which represented forty families. There were also approximately 115 children who were not yet members of the church.[54]

The summer of 1946 also marked the beginning of a Beachy Amish congregation near Kalona, Iowa. Here Moses Yoder and John Helmuth were ordained as ministers by Bishop D. O. Burkholder of Nappanee, Indiana, in June of that year.[55] This congregation was without a resident bishop until 1948 when Bishop Jonathan Miller, who had been silenced by the Old Order Amish, was reinstated by D. O. Burkholder and given charge of the Kalona congregation.[56] At present the congregation has a membership of fifty people in which twenty-two families are represented.[57]

On June 22, 1947, a Beachy Amish congregation was organized in Stark County, Ohio, by Bishop Eli D. Tice of Grantsville, Maryland. During the first year of this congregation it was under the care of Joe D. Miller, a minister who had been ordained in the Old Order Amish Church as early as 1910. On May 6, 1948, Alvin Witmer was ordained as a minister by Bishop Tice, who also on October 12, 1948, ordained Samuel J. Otto to the same office. The following spring on May 8 Otto was ordained as bishop by Tice. In 1951 this congregation had a communicant membership of ninety in which thirty-four families were represented.[58]

In 1948 there was a call for help from a group of Old Order Amish in Montgomery County, Indiana. The first two ministers of this congregation were Jacob D. Gingerich and William Yoder, who were ordained by Bishop D. O. Burkholder on June 27, 1948. On October 28, 1949, Benjamin S. Wagler was also ordained as a minister by Burkholder. Though this is the youngest of the four Indiana congregations, it has grown to be the largest. In 1950 this congregation consisted of 114 communicant members, among whom forty-two families were represented. In 1950 this congregation was yet without a resident bishop.[59]

54 D. O. Bontrager, letter dated April 21, 1950, Middlebury, Ind.

55 J. Miller, letter dated Aug. 3, 1951, Kalona, Iowa.

56 J. B. Mast, "Facts Concerning the Beachy A.M. Division of 1927," Meyersdale, Pa. (1950), 19.

57 J. Miller, letter, *op. cit.*

58 S. J. Otto, letter, *op. cit.*

59 J. D. Gingerich, letter, April 25, 1950, Montgomery, Ind.

E. Summary

When it is remembered that the total Old Order Amish population of the United States is probably in the neighborhood of 25,000 people (of whom some 13,000 are baptized adults), the twelve congregations of Beachy Amish Mennonites that are scattered through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Virginia seem almost negligible in comparison. Yet within twenty years this group has grown large enough to affect the religious life of over 2,000 persons who were formerly numbered with the 25,000 Old Order Amish.

In all the areas where Beachy Amish congregations have been organized the leaders have kept the pattern which was set by M. M. Beachy in 1927. They have allowed modern conveniences such as automobiles, tractors for field work as well as belt work, and all types of household electrical appliances. At the same time they have retained most of the typical Amish nonconformity to modern styles of apparel, both for women and men. They have kept the German language as the accepted medium of worship, both in preaching and in congregational singing. The only two exceptions to this are at funerals, where English may be preached, and at the "singings" of the young people of the church where English hymns may be sung.

Wherever a Beachy Amish congregation has been planted in the midst of a solidly Old Order Amish community, it constitutes a bridge over which those who become dissatisfied with the strictness of the Old Order group may walk into a larger freedom without having to discard many of the social habits to which they have become attached.

The Beachy Amish congregations have, however, made one change that in the long view of things is destined to be tremendously significant. Wherever they have been organized they have the Sunday school and the meetinghouse. In all the Sunday schools the New Testament in German has been the textbook for the adult classes, while the younger children learn their German alphabet.

The first result of this has been to revitalize the worship service for the younger generation as they become familiar with the language in which it is conducted. The second result has been the awakening of a zeal to evangelize those who are ignorant of the Gospel, even though they do not belong to Amish communions. This is something altogether alien to the Old Order Amish, who quote Matthew 10:5, 6 as being specifically directed against the missionary enterprise. The study of the New Testament in isolated passages may permit one to form such an opinion, but members of the Beachy

Amish congregations who read the New Testament in its entirety have also discovered the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, 20. In three of the Indiana congregations this evangelistic zeal has expressed itself in the form of a worship service on alternate Sunday evenings when special attention is paid to the children in the congregation who are not yet members of the church.[60]

The total significance of the Beachy Amish movement cannot yet be measured, but it is obvious that for the first time the Old Order Amish are confronted with a homogenous group in their own midst who have succesfully adopted most of the modern conveniences without themselves becoming worldly. The Old Order people will have more and more difficulty explaining this fact to the young of the church. The Yoder congregation in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, has taken the desperate measure of forbidding its members to work for outsiders, except for such neighborly deeds as threshing and silo filling.[61] Human nature is such that those who know it well can confidently predict the failure of such methods wherever tried.

Whatever the effect of the Beachy Amish Mennonite congregations upon the Old Order Amish may finally be, it is interesting to note that for the second time in a century the Amish of Somerset County, Pennsylvania, have furnished the midwest states with something new. From 1808 to 1865 it furnished settlers for new frontiers. From 1927 to 1949 it provided the spiritual leadership which gave birth to the Beachy Amish Mennonite congregations which often appear in the very areas where the pioneers had gone a century earlier.[62]

60 Letters from Bontrager, Burkholder, Gingerich.

61 This action was taken in either 1949 or 1950. When the writer visited the community in 1950 this ruling had created considerable comment in the neighborhood.

62 A development that has taken place since 1950 is that the Beachy and Yoder congregations no longer worship in the same meetinghouses. The Beachy congregation has built a new meetinghouse between the villages of West Salisbury and St. Paul, Pennsylvania, and now all of their services are held there. The new meetinghouse, though constructed along simple lines, is equipped with electric lights, indoor toilets, public address system, and has a full basement where the women of the church may meet for sewing and the children for Sunday school classes.

CLAUS FELBINGER'S CONFESSION OF 1560

Robert Friedmann

The document to be presented here is both a great Christian document, and one most characteristic for the spirit of Anabaptism at its best. It was composed by a Hutterite brother, perhaps of Bavarian origin, Claus Felbinger, by profession a blacksmith, who had been chosen a "minister of the Word" by the brotherhood in Moravia in 1558. While not yet confirmed in this office he went on a missionary trip to Bavaria in 1560, together with another brother, Hans Leutner. In the week before Easter, 1560, the two brethren were caught by the authorities, like so many others before and after them, and were put into prison. Here they were interrogated, mainly on the issue of infant baptism, which was the most acute issue of all between the brethren and the authorities of state and church. Thereafter they were brought to the fortress of Landshut in Bavaria where they were put into separate prison cells. Felbinger, in particular, was also chained to his place. From then to July of that year, the authorities tried with all possible means to make them recant. They were interrogated and tortured, and then again drawn into disputations. Felbinger remained steadfast and absolutely certain of his position. His was a genuine and well-founded faith which he was able to present so skillfully that everyone was amazed, not expecting a humble blacksmith to know all the arguments so clearly. When at one point Felbinger said that he intended to stay in the "simplicity of Christ," the "chancellor" (apparently the interrogating state official) answered, "I do not think that you are so simple.[1] I think there would not be one in a hundred who could give an account of himself as well as you do. Neither do I consider you an 'enthusiast' (*Schwaermer*), such as run around everywhere and have no good foundations for their teachings."[2]

From prison Felbinger sent two epistles home to the brotherhood in Moravia. (There were always humble men around who were willing to carry such mail back and forth, and there were always some loopholes in the prison system which made it possible to smuggle out these documents.) In one of these epistles he gave a detailed report of his imprisonment and of the talks and disputations with the authorities. From here the above-quoted remark was later

1 Note the double meaning of the term "simplicity" *(Einfalt)*, meaning both nonsophistication and poorness of mind.
2 Wolkan, ed., *Geschichts-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder* (Vienna, 1923), 306.

inserted in the Hutterite *Geschicht-Buch*.[3] Felbinger also submitted to the authorities a written confession of faith or *Rechenschaft,* a copy of which was again sent home where it was studied, copied, and spread among all brethren. But all Felbinger's "defense," that is, his explanation why he became an "Anabaptist," why he went to Bavaria as a missionary, and why he had taken such a stand from which he was not willing to deviate, was in vain. Since he certainly was not minded to recant, he was condemned to die, together with his brother-companion. On July 19, 1560, at Landshut, both were beheaded. The chronicle describes the scene: while the other brother was being beheaded, "Claus looked on unafraid, with good fine color. If one were not informed one could have thought that he was not involved at all in this affair."[4]

The epistles and the *Rechenschaft* (confession or account, perhaps more correctly "testimony") now became for the Brethren a real message. In 1569, when another Hutterite brother, Veit Grünberger, was arrested and brought to Salzburg where he lay in prison for seven years, he too was interrogated and involved in semi-theological disputations with the clergy, which he promptly reported home to Moravia. We read: "They asked him for his confession of faith. Answer: 'Your lord, the prince [the archbishop of Salzburg], has all the account of our religion he needs. I understand that the sheriff had sent our books [the famous Hutterite manuscript codices] to the governor. In them he may well find what we believe. For two of our ministers who were executed, Claus Felbinger at Landshut, and Haensel Haendl at Innsbruck, have given a full account of our faith, and I would not know how to improve on that.' "[5]

The Anabaptist confessions of faith are not creedal statements in a narrow sense, binding for the church, but are rather testimonies or personal statements, making clear how every brother understood personally the Anabaptist outlook, and how he would indicate his own position (far beyond mere literalism). These statements were Christian documents of a genuine character and of great spiritual depth, not something "learned" or repetitions of what others had said. Here a personal spiritual experience of rebirth and radical change in outlook on life and its values receive expression with an amazing immediacy and liveliness. One cannot help being impressed by this matter-of-fact certitude about things spiritual and by the

3 *Ibid.*, 304-7. The epistle is printed in full by Johann Loserth, *Der Communismus der Mährischen Wiedertäufer im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1894), 292-310, after a codex in Olomuce, Moravia.

4 *Geschichts-Buch,* 307.

5 *Ibid.,* 373 f., note; also R. Friedmann, "The Epistles of the Hutterian Brethren," *MQR,* XX (1946), 172.

clarity as to why this "way" was chosen and how it must be pursued. There is no fear whatsoever of suffering and death, and with all the respect due to authorities a courageous stand before judges and other officials becomes apparent. There is much nobility of mind, quite in contrast to the uncouthness of most officials and the times in general, a dignity which proves in itself that these people went through a real conversion. It is a surprising fact, incidentally, that although each brother defends himself independently and out of a personal commitment, Anabaptist documents by and large show an amazing likemindedness, proving again that whosoever was touched by the Spirit from on high experienced and understood more or less the same truth. The "world" had no attraction for them, but also no dread any more.

The document presented here, almost a first in the field of English translation, calls for much detailed study. It is no systematic or learned paper. It begins rather as a personal letter to the authorities showing them that they perhaps cannot understand the Anabaptists at all because of the unregenerate state of mind of the officials. But then Felbinger slowly turns to the different points of the interrogations and tries to develop further the doctrinal position of the Brethren in Moravia (and we may say of all Anabaptists). We do not have too many documents of this kind of that time.[6] The meaning of baptism finds a beautiful interpretation: baptism is the acceptance of the new covenant with the Lord from which there is no way back. The Lord's Supper is understood as the ever renewed consecration of a true Christian fellowship and brotherly unity. And toward the end of the document the great issue of sin is treated, above all the basic relationship between original sin and actual sin. This is perhaps the most important section of the document, in which Felbinger emphasizes the need for a distinction between "being born in sin" (which causes physical death for all men) and "committing sin" (which would cause eternal damnation). The Anabaptists believe that man can and must fight "the good fight" against sin—something which certainly was not the common belief of Christians of the sixteenth century, and which might not even be all too common today. In reply to the question, "why Moravia?" that is, whether one could not be a good Christian anywhere, Claus gives a very sensitive answer, allowing us an insight into the roots of

6 The foremost text would be Peter Riedemann's well-known *Rechenschaft* or *Account of Our Religion and Faith*, published in an English translation by the Society of Brethren of Paraguay and England in 1950. Somewhat contemporary with Claus Felbinger's Confession is also Thomas von Imbroich's *Confessio oder Bekanntnus eines frommen und gottliebenden Christen* (n.p., 1558), widely read as a contemporary pamphlet, later also printed in the *Martyrs' Mirror*. It is not known whether the Hutterian Brethren knew this booklet or not.

the cohesiveness of genuine brotherhood as practiced among the Hutterites in Moravia. It is above all, no doubt, the motive of Christian brotherly love which shines through all these pages.

Felbinger's writings are found in numerous Hutterite codices, both in Europe and in America. One of these is Codex III, 124, a 1574 document in the library of the Archbishop at Esztergom (Gran), Hungary. They were copied and read everywhere. But while the two epistles mentioned above have been published in full by Johann Loserth,[7] the *Confession* has never been published or even received serious attention, although it amply deserves it. When I visited the Hutterite Bruderhofs in Canada in 1954 I was shown an English translation of this *Confession,* mimeographed as a small booklet entitled "The Church and the World." The Brethren were glad to give me a copy of it. The preface says that the translation had been done by the "Society of Brothers (known as Hutterians)," of Primavera, Paraguay, and Wheathill, England; the reproduction was done in Manitoba in 1952. We certainly owe these brethren a word of thanks for this excellent work. The writer of this introduction has taken pains to make the translation more clear, with apology to the original translator, and to add a few needed footnotes. We are glad to present this precious document now for the first time in English. Although it is a document of Hutterite origin, it yet may be considered as an expression of genuine Anabaptism in general. I am sure that both Swiss and Dutch-North German Brethren of the sixteenth century would have readily approved it, just as the Hutterites on their part frequently copied tracts and writings from writers of the two other branches of that great movement. It is after all only one and the same idea which pervades it: true salvation can be found only in true discipleship; and this, in turn, is possible only through genuine rebirth and conversion of the mind.

Claus Felbinger's Confession of Faith

Addressed to the Council of Landshut, 1560

Dear Lords and Magistrates of this town of Landshut, God who does nothing without a cause, has so disposed that we have been arrested for the sake of divine truth, and handed over to you as prisoners. Although we have already been questioned twice in Neumarkt by the county sheriff and his assistants, and several times here by the lord's men regarding our way of life, yet I feel in my heart

7 The longer epistle was published by Loserth in 1894 (note 3, *supra*); the shorter one was published by the same author in his study, "Zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer in Mähren," *Zeitschrift für Allgemeine Geschichte,* I (1884). This was the very first publication on Anabaptism after the appearance of Beck's great source book, the *Geschichts-Bücher,* in 1883.

that I have not fully disclosed my mind in such a way that you might understand the foundation on which we stand.

It is therefore my earnest request that you take the time and trouble to read this, our written confession, wherein you may perceive how we live and on what foundation we stand and build. In it you will see (if there be a divine spark within you) that we have done nothing out of a hasty decision or without reason, although the blind world considers us fools for acting as we do. We, however, know that God's Word cannot lie. If we build rightly thereon, and walk worthy of and in accordance with it, then our heart suffers no harm when, trusting and confiding in the Word of God, we do not allow the children of darkness to drive us from it. For so one must enter, through Christ, through much pain, suffering, fear, and tribulation, the hard, rough, narrow, slippery way through the narrow gate, which but few find, but which Christ has shown is the way to life, and has Himself gone before us.

You will now, however, find herein the main matters regarding which we are questioned, and the answers thereto, to which with God's help we hope to stand firmly. This we shall confess as divine truth, because it is the truth, and we wish in this matter to wait upon the Lord. What He permits you to bring upon us must be to us, who love Him from the heart, for the greatest good, for salvation and comfort—and for you, if you do not change your lives and repent truly, it must be a hard testimony against you.

My lords, first, as you also are servants of God, though outside the perfection of Christ (namely, to take vengeance on evildoers, to punish the evil, and to protect and shelter the devout), God has given the sword into your hand. He has granted you such honor and dignity as is meet, that you may be rightly obeyed in that which is not against God. And we say to you: "He who withstands the authorities in just matters withstands God's ordinance, for the authorities hold their office in order that disobedience might be punished." This is the reason, you servants of God, that I wanted to remind and exhort you to consider your office—not that we were dismayed at having to suffer for what we have done for the sake of our confession. Oh, no! For we do not count ourselves worthy or able or good enough to suffer anything for the sake of God's Word; but we praise God with all our hearts that in His providence He has ordained that we, unworthy men, be true witnesses of His holy truth. And that we have also vowed and promised Him in the covenant of true Christian baptism, namely, where need be to lay down our lives for His name, and after recognizing the truth, never to act against God con-

sciously and willfully, in word or in deed, but with His help rather to suffer death than do so, to follow His holy Word unswervingly, and to adorn our faith with work pleasing to God. For He has given us, who believe His Word, grace and strength to do His divine will joyfully; this, however, was impossible to us until we had given ourselves utterly to Him. God has promised from the beginning that He would, in all things, make it possible for those who truly believe to do what He demands of them, and what is right in His eyes; for He would confirm their faith with the strength of His Holy Spirit, who would lead and guide them into all truth and strengthen their spirit, so that they may know for certain that they are children of God and coheirs (*Miterben*) with Christ, in so far as they suffer with Him.

Therefore (dear authorities and servants of God) search us as you will and you shall find that we have not acted against God, or wronged any man, but have lived both here and in other places without harming anyone. The work of God, however, is amazing in the eyes of carnal men, for God's truth has always been contrary and unbearable to the world, so that even the very wisest in the world have not been able to recognize Christ, who has been truth eternally. Therefore from the beginning he that is born of the Spirit has had to be persecuted in all possible ways by the man born of the flesh, for they have been in every way contrary to one another. Christ Himself said of His marvelous coming into the world that He did not come to bring peace on earth, but discord and the sword, to divide men two against three and three against two, and they would find their greatest enemies among the members of their own household. That the Lord will bring to pass, for two will be working at one mill, and one will be taken and the other left; two will lie in one bed, and one will be taken and the other left. That is the greatest thing for which we, through the Word of God, can prepare the way, that God visits men with His word of grace, and gathers and separates those according to His holy will who reverence God's covenant. Thus faith is not a matter of course. Some follow the teachings of Christ immediately. Others regard them as seduction: for those who do not receive the teachings from above, revealed by the Father Himself, cannot grasp them, and we cannot help them. We would have liked all men to understand and recognize what pertains to their salvation, and to repent now, in the time of grace, while it is still "today"; since God's wrath hangs over the head of sinners and the unrepentant, and will turn all the godless to hell. For the unrighteous will never inherit God's kingdom, but only those who have cleansed their souls through obedience to truth, and patiently with good works seek eternal life.

We have been asked by sundry people why we have come into the prince's [of Bavaria] land, and draw people away. My answer is, we do not go only into this land, but into all lands, wherever our language is known, for where God opens a door for us and shows us zealous hearts that truly seek Him, hearts that are discontented with the godless life of the world and would gladly do what is right—there we go, for we have divine cause to do so. For heaven and earth are the Lord's and all men are His; but we have given, surrendered, and sacrificed ourselves wholly to God. Where He sends us and will use us, there we go, in obedience to His divine will, regardless of what we must suffer and endure.

Further they have asked us: "As governmental authority is ordained by God and has its power from Him, therefore all should fear and honor it—now, why do you not do so?" Mark the answer! The government is not given for the just to fear, but only for the evil, for the government should be a shield to the just. For this reason the Lord has placed a sword in its hand, and its annual income in taxes, interest, duties, etc., that it may be able to execute its office and protect the just. If it does not do so, God will punish it the harder. Therefore we are gladly and willingly subject to the government for the Lord's sake, and in all just matters we will in no way oppose it. When, however, the government requires of us what is contrary to our faith and conscience—as swearing oaths and paying hangman's dues or taxes for war—then we do not obey its command. This we do not do out of obstinacy or pride, but only out of pure fear of God. For it is our duty to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

That is the reason why we refuse, namely, that we fear God. Christ forbids those whom He loves, those who are meant for Life, all carnal wrath and vengeance. Thus they are forbidden to kill, and are told to leave all vengeance to God. Therefore we do nothing to promote bloodshed, for such does not befit a Christian who is taught of God in His Son, since we should be like young children, without resentment or bitterness, and like a dove, guileless. To the men of old it was indeed said, "Thou shalt hate thine enemy and love thy friend." "But I say unto you," said Christ, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, that ye may be children of your Father in heaven." Therefore one must distinguish between the Old and the New Testaments. "It was indeed said to the men of old, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, and a head for a head; but I say unto you that in all things ye resist not evil."

That we do not swear an oath nor promise an oath, as is the way of the world, has its origin in the words which Christ speaks to those who are His: "To them of old it was said, 'Thou shalt not swear falsely, but perform unto the Lord thy oath. But I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth. But your yea shall be yea, and your nay, nay. What is more than these cometh of evil." Therefore, dear men, consider this when we oppose you in anything; do not think that we do it in pride, but only because we fear God, who is indeed to be feared. For the apostles also did not let themselves be driven by the Jews or by any authority from what they had recognized as right before God, but rather laid down their lives.

And that I, too, with God's help, hope to do, and will let no one stop me from speaking of that which is right before God, especially of what I have seen and heard and sensed in my heart, through the renewal of the Holy Spirit, of the resurrection of Christ Jesus, who has established new life within us who believe in Him and honor His name, who give ourselves wholly to Him and are quiet before Him.

And we say freely and confess openly that among you there is no godly life, as your works also bear witness; but that which the devil has planted grows, yea, all manner of unrighteousness gains ground, so that it is as though your sin can no longer be opposed. For the world has run wild and is so sunken in sin that it knows nothing of God. And now the very teaching of the Gospel is to men a new teaching, a heresy and a false teaching. For when God awakens for them a messenger of salvation who proclaims to them the divine Word and shows them the way of blessedness, they do not believe him but count him a fool, and so regard those who are rich in the Spirit as mad and foolish, and their malice has blinded them to such an extent. They kick, as it were, their salvation from them and make themselves unworthy of eternal life. For they do not believe that one can serve God without sin, in true piety, as though it were not possible to leave the sinful, evil nature which is the work of the devil.

Then Satan would be stronger than God—but far be it! For Christ has been sent by the Father into this world to take away the power of the devil (I John 3:8), the old serpent, tread upon his head, destroy his work, and banish sin—that is, from all who gladly let their sins be taken away. These are they who listen to His holy Word, believe it with all their hearts, and keep it in a sensitive, pure, and good heart.

Now, does Christ compel people with the stocks to hear His teaching, as is the manner of those who think they are Christians?

Oh, no! On the contrary, He speaks only to those who thirst for His justice, who have ears to hear, who are heavy of heart, who would gladly be set free from their sins—who are urged and drawn by God. Know well that faith is not a matter of course but that it is a special gift, given only to those who love God.

God wants no compulsory service. On the contrary, He loves a *free, willing heart* that serves Him with a joyful soul and does what is right joyfully. As it is written, "Believers will obey God in love," and again, "Those who fear God will do diligently what is pleasing to Him and fulfill His law." For God has not promised those who believe in Him a dull, slavish spirit. Oh, no! But a childlike, zealous, free, and willing spirit, in which we, trusting in faith, cry to God the Father. He represents us mightily before Him, as John also said: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Now how can the world, yea, all sinners and unjust men who allow themselves to be ruled by the spirit of evil which drives them from one evil deed to the next, how can they call to God in such a way, they who not only do not keep His commandments, but do only what is contrary to God? Who cease not to insult His holy name and to rouse Him to wrath? How should He be gracious and favorable to them, even should they ask? As the man born blind whom Christ healed said, "We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth" (John 9). And David said, "If, Lord, I have unrighteousness in my heart, then wilt thou not hear me, O God" (Psalm 66). And Christ said, "The true worshippers of God must worship him in spirit and in truth, for God, who is a Spirit, wanteth such to worship him" (John 4).

This is once more to be found in the Lord's Prayer, which Christ taught His obedient children who clung to Him in all temptations, and which He spoke purely for the Word's sake and not for sinners. For no sinner can pray the Lord's prayer in accordance with truth, for he has not given himself over into God's obedience. With the first word he begins to lie, and in doing so he does nothing else but mock God and rouse Him to wrath, and ask vengeance on himself.[8] Therefore what does not arise from faith is sin. To the impure

8 Here Felbinger repeats an old teaching of the Brethren, namely, that the Lord's Prayer in the mouth of unregenerated persons becomes a pure mockery. The earliest (but not the only example of this teaching is found in a tract of the outstanding Anabaptist martyr Leonhard Schiemer (d. 1528). His "Epistle to the Church in Rattenburg on the Inn" (Tirol) of 1527, contains also a section entitled: "How the pagans, that is, the nominal Christians, pray." Here he writes about as follows: "In order that you may understand me better

nothing is pure, for his very mind and conscience are impure. But to the pure all things are pure. His prayer is pleasing to God, as it is urged by God's Spirit. Those, however, who do not have His Spirit are not His. Only those who are impelled and urged by the same are God's children.

How incomprehensible a thing it is to the worldly-wise when one shows them the narrow way! The word of the cross of Christ is, of course, foolishness to them that are lost. They declare that we mount far too high; that Christ has paid and has already done what is necessary for us; that one need do no more than believe this firmly, and simply confess himself a sinner, for God is merciful and gracious. They say not a word either of the new birth, without which no one can be blessed, or of true repentance. For true repentance is "to sin no more," to begin a new and holy life with God, and to conform no more to the world.

Thus the worldly-wise flaunt their high knowledge before us and say, "We find it in the Old and New Testaments. As we see things, you are aiming far too high. Were none to be saved except those who act as you do, the whole world would have to be condemned at once." To this we answer that we believe the Word of God utterly: the Word that stands and that cannot lie. It does not conform to the world. Men have only to act in accordance with the Word. The worldly-wise, especially the monks, clergy, and scribes think that because they have read books and are well practiced therein they can be found wanting in nothing. Oh, foolish men! The wisdom of God is neither to be gleaned from books nor learned in universities—far from it! For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they who do accordingly.

Thus one sees that only those have the secret of the kingdom of heaven who faithfully follow Christ: the others having eyes see not, and having ears hear not. David said that the secret of God is only with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. They that continue in Christ's teaching will understand the truth, and the truth will make them free. Knowledge only puffs up, but love improves and builds up. For the Word of the cross of Christ repels all the wise. Reason advises not to come under the yoke, for the way of the flesh is enmity to God.

Therefore Paul says, "Consider your calling, dear brothers! Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble

I shall indicate their [nominal Christians'] blasphemous praying, so that you might be better on your guard. They say, 'Our Father' mockingly, for they have never begun to become His children, they do not even want to be, and have never been, obedient to Him" (Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse Oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter,* Leipzig, 1938, 68, 69; R. Friedmann, "The Epistles of the Hutterian Brethren," *MQR,* XX, 1946, 164).

are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29) but praise be God's. Therefore Christ praised His Father in that He had hidden this from the mighty of this world and revealed it unto babes.

We are accused also of condemning all who are not of our mind and who act not as we do. That we deny. We condemn no man, but we show to men their reprobate life and warn them of condemnation, and this we do in accordance with the Word of God that cannot lie. For we believe this Word, and that it will come to pass, and for the sake of loyalty to it we are often forced to lay down our lives. No human being can condemn another. Judgment is in the hand of the Lord; but sinful, evil works are what condemn man, when he has not left them in accordance with the Word of God and brought forth honest fruits of repentance.

Further I was asked with regard to *baptism,* how often I was baptized. I said, "Once, as God has commanded." They then asked if I had not also been baptized by the brothers. I answered, "The devout brothers who baptized me in accordance with the command of Christ first taught me repentance and faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Then, at my request, they baptized me on confession of my faith; which faith, God, according to His promise, also sealed and strengthened with His Holy Spirit, who has until now kept me in the way of truth. And it is my hope in God that He take Him not from me until my end."

But infant baptism I regard as simply nothing. It is conceived by men for the sake of money, that the parsons may by its means enrich themselves; it is a plant which the heavenly Father has not planted; therefore it must be rooted out. For they find not a single word in the Old or in the New Testament about infant baptism, not a word that shows either that Christ commanded or that His disciples practiced it. On the contrary, they held to the one and only true baptism. And that is when those who, having reached years of discretion, join the faith on being awakened by the proclamation of the Word of God and, on desiring to enter the covenant with God, let themselves be united by the covenant of grace of true Christian baptism. In that they take leave of the sinful pleasure of this world and reject the service of the devil. Therefore the devil strives through his messengers to hinder at all costs the revelation of the true Christian baptism. Therefore has the antichrist, the abomination of desolation, the pope, placed such emphasis on the accursed infant baptism, which is meant only to harm true Christian baptism

and the command of Christ, to hinder true subjection to God. For baptism is a covenant of a good conscience with God (I Pet. 3:21) and a certain declaration that the man has been accepted as a light to the inheritance of all saints. Now what does a young child know of a "good conscience with God"? It is mere trumpery! One who stands by him, the godfather, is supposed to have faith for the child, while he himself does not know what faith is, is perhaps even a drunkard, a blasphemer of God or adulterer, a child of perdition.

To sum up, it is a foolish and blind affair. Through it all manner of evil and infamous men get the precious name, in that they call themselves Christians, which thus but becomes a cloak for their knavery. For a Christian has not received his name from baptism, but from the conduct of his whole life.

He who lives as a Christian is a Christian, he who lives as a heathen is a heathen. All this has been twisted by the antichrist, who still holds firmly with the sword that he who will not believe him must die. Then the priests of Baal cry out, "Beware! it is a time of great danger! Wolves are wanting to break in among the sheep!" What great folly! What sheep have they! It has now come to this, that the "sheep" tear the "wolves," that their "shepherds" want to shear them and suck their blood! Yet they hold the shepherds to be messengers, though they see in their lives that they are ruled not by the Spirit of God but by the spirit of wickedness. How then can they speak what is good, since they are evil? God does not entrust His holy Word to such blasphemous men, for God is Himself the Word that He has committed to true men. As Paul said clearly to Timothy and Titus, they should be men who are blameless, the husband of one wife only, vigilant, sober, of a right mind, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach the doctrine of faith, not lovers of wine, not strikers, not greedy of filthy lucre, but kind, not brawlers, not covetous, one that conducts his own house well, that he may have believing children. He must, however, also have a good testimony. They should likewise be courageous, not double-tongued, but sober, just, holy, devout, and bear in a clean conscience the mysteries of the faith (I Tim. 3; Titus 3).

Hold your clergy up to this mirror to see if there be in them a vein of such virtue! Is not the opposite everywhere reflected? For this reason no one is improved by their teaching. It brings forth no fruit. Why? They do not speak as the mouth of God, but only their own thoughts, the deceit of their own hearts, and do but destroy themselves and all who listen to them, holding them in what is evil. Their word has no strength: it makes no one free from sin and

devout, it renews none. They remain the same old sinful wineskins, that are unable to hold the wine of divine sweetness. The Holy Spirit will not dwell in men who are the vessels of sin. He enters no heart that wills to do evil. Therefore they are blind guides.

I was also asked what our attitude is to the holy sacrament. I said, "The sacraments of the clergy I regard as naught, for their blessing is a curse in the eyes of God, since they despise His Word. But I think much of the Supper of Christ and of His memory, and of him who holds it and can do so worthily—but this involves much."

Then they asked me if I do not believe that Christ is essentially present in the bread and wine as the very body and blood in which He suffered for us on the cross. I answered, "No! Christ has ascended to heaven. There He sits at the right hand of God, the heavenly Father. He does not let Himself be conjured thence into the hands of sinners, that they may afterward sell Him for money. He is the enemy of all evildoers. The mad shall not appear before His eyes. Thus, also, the mad, drunken clergy may not come before His face."

"But," say they, "He has clearly said, This is my body and my blood." Yes. We know also, praise be to God, the interpretation of this high mystery which He wanted to disclose to His loved ones in this comforting supper—namely, by means of bread and wine He has shown the community of His body. Even as natural bread is composed by the coming together of many grains, ground under the millstones, and each giving the others all it possesses, they have community one with another, and thus become one loaf; and as, likewise, the wine is composed of many grapes, each sharing its juice with the rest in the wine press, so that they become one drink. Even so are we also, in that we become completely of one nature with Him, in life and death, and are all one in Christ: He the vine and we His branches, He the head and we His members.[9]

But the branches must bear no other fruit than that which it is the nature of the vine to bear. For all unfruitful branches are cut off and cast into the fire. On the other hand, the limbs of Christ's body seek not earthly goods, and regard nothing else but what the

9 This is an early formulation of one of the most characteristic Anabaptist interpretations of the Lord's Supper in view of their ideal of communal living. This parable of the bread and wine in which the single grain and grape has to give up its "individuality" in order to become bread and wine, and the application to communal life in which each brother has to surrender his individuality and self-will, was most popular with the Brethren. Interestingly enough, it is still today used also by the Old Order Amish in their communion services, even though they do not live in community of goods.

The story of this parable goes back to the time of the primitive church. It is first mentioned in the *Didaché or the Teachings of the Twelve Apostles* (about A.D. 120), and hereafter in the Third Letter of Cyprian (about A.D. 240-50). Its starting point may have been I Cor. 10:17. See also R. Friedmann, "The Epistles . . . ," *MQR*, XX (1946), 168 f., also the same author, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* (Goshen, 1949), 76 f., and Lydia Müller, *Der Kommunismus der Mährischen Wiedertäufer* (Leipzig, 1927), 66.

head, Christ, wills through them and inspires in them by His Spirit. He who has not His Spirit, however, is none of His. But they who have given and surrendered themselves wholly to God, with body and soul and all their members, let themselves be ruled by His Holy Spirit, led in faith by Him in true confidence in the Lord, quietly suffering Him to work and keeping His Word in a pure, good heart, such are able to bring forth fruit in patience. Only they who have the Word of God, which is spirit and life, within them (the flesh is of no profit) eat the body of Christ and drink His blood. He who acts otherwise deceives himself.

For no sinner who has not yet cleansed his heart through obedience to truth in the spirit of sincere brotherly love may sit down at this Supper. For Christ kept it with His disciples whom He declared pure for the Word's sake in which they had believed, and one sees that Judas sat down at the table with an impure heart, lightly and thoughtlessly, despising the Lord's word to talk of all things earnestly. He did not take it to heart though Christ Himself goaded him by saying there was a traitor among them, a word that shocked the devout though they were innocent. He, however, was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin and was no longer able to grasp the word. But what happened when he took the sop? The devil entered into him, and drove him to fulfill his judgment. Therefore he had to attack his Master and cause His innocent death, as an example to all who are still unprepared, who with impenitent, unclean hearts sit at the Lord's table, hypocritically, as though they were true members of the body of Christ, wholly surrendered to Him.

Oh, the Lord knows them all! He is not deceived! And the man harms only himself who dares to oppose and tempt God; as Paul writes to the Corinthians, warning each earnestly, "Let a man examine himself well before he goeth in, to see if he be pure in heart, surrendered to God in divine obedience, a true member of his body. Where not—let him leave it alone. For whosoever eateth unworthily thereof is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and eateth judgment to himself, in that he discerneth not the Lord's body," for he refuses to see what kind of members belong to the body of Christ. For Christ will not have impure, adulterous members, who are still cleaving to themselves and to others in carnal love. No! He wants members pure and holy as He, the Lord, is holy, who love God above all things and hold to Him alone.

I have also been asked why I have left the "holy Christian Church" and given myself up to a "sect" that is nowhere tolerated and is obnoxious to the emperor, king, princes, and all men. There-

upon I answered, I have not left the true Christian Church; I have but joined her and let myself be incorporated into her by true Christian baptism. I have no doubt that I am in the true community and fellowship of the saints, in which there is forgiveness and remission of sins, to which the power and key is given and committed by the Holy Spirit to bind and to loose, both in heaven and on earth. I feel in my heart that through no other doctrine could my heart and soul have reached peace with God and true calmness. For at the moment I answered God's voice with an obedient heart saying "Here am I!" my soul revived, and is now waiting in blessed hope and true confidence for His salvation. Praise and thanks be to God for the love, grace, and mercy He has shown me, unworthy man! And I have no doubt that God has removed my sins farther from me than the East is from the West, and that He will neither behold them any more nor think of them. If I continue to walk faithfully before Him He has promised to take from me all sin and bury it in the innocence of Christ. Of this I am certain.

Now where previously in my blind, unconscious infant baptism was I able to have such faith and certainty in God? Thus I have not left the true Christian Church, but the so-called "Christian" congregation of sinners and the unjust, prostitutes, adulterers, gamblers, slanderers of God, gluttons, winebibbers, liars, covetous men, and idolaters who do not cease to rouse God to wrath. I have indeed come out from among all these, for I will have no fellowship with such unless they leave their godless nature and repent truly by coming to a true recognition of their sins. For God has still a devout people on earth, whom He has shocked and startled into leaving sin through His living Word, whom He has called from the world to His holy name and gathered by the Holy Spirit. These He has chosen to be His own, to the praise of His glory, that they might walk according to His nature, proclaim His strength and virtue, adorn their faith with works pleasing to God, put on the garment of innocence and the cloak of justice and righteousness, and always bear before them the breastplate of right action; that the world may see what is pleasing to God and have occasion to consider its ungodly life, to leave it and turn from sins to God. For God has never left Himself without a witness, in words and works, so that no one can excuse himself before Him.

But that they say this "sect" is obnoxious to princes, lords, and all the world, for everywhere men speak against it; this does not frighten me or any lover of God. It but makes us the more certain. Through this we believe more fully the divine witness, for word

and deed are in accord. For when the devout Simeon had the child Jesus in his arms in the temple, he foretold to His mother Mary that Jesus would be the light of the world and salvation to the ends of the earth, and the sign for this was to be that He would be spoken against. As though he wanted to say: "Not only He, but all His seed who believe in Him and walk in His footsteps." As He Himself said, "If they have called the father of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household" (Luke 6), for they shall slander your name and cast you off as evildoers for the Son of Man's sake. And "blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

They who do not know God likewise say, "Now why do you not stay here? Can not one also do right here and become blessed? Or is blessedness confined to Moravia?" Now note the answer. One can do good just as well here and become blessed—if one would only do it! But men not only do not do it themselves, but they hinder those who would gladly do good. Here men are compelled to idolatry with the stocks and robbed of their goods. As Paul wrote to Timothy: "All those that will live a godly life in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." For a devout soul that fears God cannot keep silent but speaks and witnesses against their abominable life, saying they cannot please God, much less become blessed. Whereupon hate is roused and from that hour they say, "Away with these rogues! They want to be better than we are: it is not right that they should live!" Then the devout man must flee with Jacob, who was beloved of God, before the unstable Esau and his children, and go to Mesopotamia to his friends and fellows in faith.

Therefore, as is said above, blessedness is not confined to any land or place; for the Word of God does not suffer itself to be bound. He that fears God and does right is pleasing to God, wherever he may be; but the true children of God come together in zeal for God and do not remain apart from each other, that each may be a comfort to the rest. For a devout man is never happier than with his dear brothers and fellows in faith, where each can show the others love and good, yea, faithfulness and honor, as divine love has a way of looking upon itself as the neighbor's debtor and is diligent to help him with all its strength, and to do so with joy. For one devout heart refreshes the other with the gift it has received from God for the

good of the body of Christ, which is His holy church, all believing, devout hearts that have bound themselves together in God's love. There one sees holy examples, good patterns of the devout fathers in word and deed, provoking one to emulation. That is the most pleasant of all to the lover of God, as it is written, "Wisdom is a golden jewel to the obedient ear."

The devout David also desired this, as he says in the Book of Psalms: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that runs down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments. There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." And again: "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked. I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord: that I may publish the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." For one sings for the others, for a devout man continually gives the others cause to love God, and is a provocation to love and to all good works.

Therefore also is it written: "With the devout thou wilt show thyself devout, with the pure wilt show thyself pure, and with the upright thou wilt show thyself upright—but with the evil one thou becomest evil, with the froward thou dost act frowardly." Therefore Sirach said: "Birds of a feather flock together." So is it also with man. He seeks those like himself. For woe to him that is alone when he falls! Who will help him up?

Complete oneness [*Einigkeit*], separation from the world, and fellowship [*Gemeinschaft,* i.e., communal life], is only to be found in the perfect kingdom of Christ, for one sees how Christ separates all those whom He has ordained for life, how He has now confirmed the new testament of divine grace with His death and has won from the Father the promised Spirit who shall lead all true believers into truth. He began communal life among them. As one finds in the Acts of the Apostles, in the first five chapters, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down: and distribution was made unto every man accord-

ing as he had need; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." And all of them were of one heart and of one soul, and none who was not yet might join them.

And God still has such a church on earth, which acts according to His law and walks in true community of spiritual as well as of temporal gifts and goods. For God wills to have children who are of His nature, who are not false; who let themselves be ruled by His Holy Spirit, through whom they are gathered and kept at one. That I testify of them with truth.

They say furthermore: "You are but justifying yourselves. Now none is just—none save the one, God. We will wait with the obvious sinners in the temple until He tells us we are just." Yes, would they but do so and come into the "Temple" in which there is remission of sins! But the Temple is the true Christian Church, the true community of saints. Therein, however, they will not go—how then can God justify them? But we have come into this Temple and confessed ourselves obvious sinners before God and His Holy Spirit. Then we were set free through the justification of the saints and their earnest prayer (to God be praise!), and can and will, with God's help, hold to justification with the obvious sinner, and sin no more, that nothing worse need overtake us! For this reason you do not understand this saying at all, but are even like the hypocrites who think they can please God without repentance. You go and sin, building on God's mercy, and at the same time you will not leave sin and evil that God may establish a new life within you. If Christ has set you free from sin, as you boast, why do you still act so ungodly? You are just as free as a prisoner lying bound, who says he is free and is walking, while his hands and feet are in the stocks. All would rightly laugh at such. For he that sins is not yet free but the servant of sin, and the servant will be no heir, but the Son and such as the Son makes truly free.

Then they continue: "I do not believe that one can serve God without sin, for sin always goes with one." Yes, but one must discriminate between having sin and committing sin. To have sin and to commit sin are very different things. No man who is born of a woman and the seed of man is without sin. For they all share in the original sin that comes from Adam. For the same sin has entered all men, as indeed David said: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me, and every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil from his youth." As also John said: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not

in us." And James said, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here one can note clearly how far original sin harms man; namely, it causes him physical death.[10] That one sees in children. Although they know of no sin and have never committed sin nor ever roused God to wrath, yet they must die just as the old die—but sin harms their soul not at all. But when the child grows up, the stronger will be his inclination to sin. Therefore one must teach children in the fear of the Lord and keep them with the rod (which takes the evil out of the child's heart) until they reach understanding and grow up. Then one sees what he will do. When he has pleasure in devoutness and a love for God's Word and believes it, he desires also to enter into the bond of God with all God's children, and to spend his time in true godliness until death. If it is also witnessed that this has been well proved, then he is baptized at his desire on confession of faith in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Where, however, he does not let himself be drawn by the Lord's Word nor wants to walk accordingly, but practices sin and evil, then we remove him from the church, as no warning or punishment helps him. Thus do we deal with the children among us.

And therefore, as has been said above, much is said in the world about sin without discrimination—as though Paul, John, or James were also sinners, since they confessed that they were not without sin. Now note, original sin, the rising urge in flesh suggesting sin, the inclination or desire, evil occurrences and sinful thoughts through which man is tempted to do wrong—from these the devout are not exempt. The devout man is tempted by this. This is all sin, and still rouses itself in the body. That fills a devout lover of God with fear and trembling. He would gladly be free of it. It often appalls him, troubles his heart, and makes him sad. He cries to God, beseeches that He might take it away from him, pleads that he has indeed pleasure in true devoutness, as Paul had when he said, "The messenger of Satan buffeteth me as a warning to my flesh. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me, but the Lord said unto me, 'Paul, be content with my grace, for through thy weakness is my strength seen and felt more strongly.'" And again Paul said: "I delight in the law of God after the inward

10 This is a general Anabaptist (Hutterite) doctrine, presented in detail in the great *Rechenschaft* of Peter Riedemann of 1540, which of course Claus Felbinger must have known well. For a detailed discussion, including a reprint of the essential section, see Robert Friedmann, "Peter Riedemann on Original Sin and the Way of Redemption," *MQR* (1952), 210-16. The chapters which particularly matter here are: "What Original Sin Is" and "The Harm Wrought by Original Sin." It might be said that Claus Felbinger repeats these ideas, although not slavishly but more in the form of a free paraphrase.

man: but the law of sin in my members striveth against the law of God in my heart. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, however, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath given me the victory" (Rom. 7).

Just so have devout men lamented unto the grave over this sin, but they were not sinners after conversion, after they had once received grace. As Paul said to the Galatians: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" (Gal. 2) God forbid. How could we want to live in sin, when we have died to sin? (Rom. 6) But the world calls all who have sin "sinners" without discernment. A child in the cradle also has sin, but is no sinner. The man also who truly repented, was forgiven by God in His divine goodness, and God has passed over all the sins which he has done, and will never more think of them.

But original sin remains: from it he is not set free. As long as man is in the flesh, he must fight against it. In this God will preserve him if he has a horror of sin and hates his own flesh. For one who truly fears God, who does not sin consciously and intentionally, knows that formerly he roused God, his Lord, to wrath and betrayed Him; therefore he refuses this harm to his inner being, he gives no place to the temptation and does not follow sinful thoughts, but fears God and is master of his own heart. Thus one must not sin but withstand sin when one seeks to punish the cunning of the flesh, to "take reason prisoner under the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Therefore we must make a distinction. Because a devout man does not consent in his heart to sin and does not stretch out his limbs to do wrong, he is no sinner. Though he has indeed sins that stir themselves powerfully within him, he fears God and overpowers himself and crushes the sinful suggestion through the strength of the Spirit. When this is the case, sin must be melted and the work of the body must be killed through the Spirit, that sin may not be living and active but cease its work.

They speak thus: "Now we are truly children of wrath by nature from the womb. What would happen to the child were original sin not taken from him by baptism?" To this we say: Original sin is not taken from man until the grave. We all might, however, have remained under the wrath of God if God in His mercy had not thought of us and sent us the promised Messiah, namely Christ, who has stilled the wrath of God and won grace for those who believe utterly in Him. He is also the justification of young children and will absolve them until evil be found active in them. Therefore Christ

points His disciples to little children, saying, "Unless ye repent and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." But the Lord, for all His grace, does allow such weaknesses to cleave to His saints that they have to be subject to all temptation. This He does that they exalt not themselves above grace and revelation, nor become puffed up and think that they can lack nothing. Therefore He lets them feel their nothingness, that they may remain lowly and not set their hopes upon the flesh nor put too much trust in themselves, but trust alone in Him who awakens the dead. Thus God gives His children cause to pray: to pray from the depths of their heart. Thus even the weakness of the devout serves to God's praise, for a devout man through it only comes nearer to God. Though he sink in weakness seven times a day, yet he does not remain lying but seeks the Lord.

But the ungodly who do not fear God, when caught in sin fall and remain lying in their wickedness. They find pleasure in doing sin, and without any fear of God commit deadly sins and vices. These cut men off from the kingdom of God, and they are judged by the Holy Spirit. Concerning these sins mention is made in Romans 1, I Corinthians 6, Galatians 5, Ephesians 4, and Acts 21 and 22.

By me
Claus Felbinger.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND RESEARCH NOTES

THE OLDEST CHURCH DISCIPLINE OF THE ANABAPTISTS

ROBERT FRIEDMANN

The Anabaptist church has been correctly called a church of order,[1] that is, a disciplined and regulated church whereby this order is accepted by all on a voluntary basis. This fundamental orientation distinguishes Anabaptism from many related movements of a more individualistic and loose organization. From its very inception the brethren realized that a church cannot exist unless some basic rules and regulations are laid down whereby the brethren express their willingness to live accordingly or to suffer the penalty of the ban and exclusion. Such a "church order" (*Gemeinde-Ordnung*) or "discipline" then is a set of rules "how a Christian should live in the brotherhood," if he wants to be a disciple of Christ, and likewise how a fellowship of such committed disciples should be "organized," if the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are to be translated into practical terms here and now, applicable for the entire brotherhood.

The oldest church discipline of this kind seems to be that famous document called *Brotherly Union of Several Children of God,* commonly and briefly called the *Seven Articles,* adopted at Schleitheim, Switzerland, February 24, 1527.[2] Usually these articles are described as a confession of faith, which to a certain extent they actually are. But they also lay down some of the more practical rules, thus representing in a rudimentary form a real church regulation or discipline.

It has not been known until now that the early Anabaptists of Tirol likewise possessed a church discipline (so entitled) of about the same time as the Schleitheim Articles. It has been available ever since the original text of the Hutterite chronicle was published in 1923 (Wolkan, *Geschicht-Buch*) but has never been recognized in its true meaning. Recent research in Hutterite manuscript literature has convinced the present writer that this section in the chronicle is of prime significance, all the more since in numerous Hutterite codices a certain document is found which, if not completely identical with the above-mentioned passage, is yet so clearly related to it that it must be considered the original from which the chronicler took his text, slightly adjusting it to the need of his work.

I refer to the passage in the *Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder,* pages 60-61, called *Ordnung der Gemein, wie ein Christ leben soll* (Discipline of the church, how a Christian ought to live), in twelve brief articles, inserted at the year 1529. It gives the impression that the writer (Caspar Braitmichel) had our document before him, liked it, and thought it worthy of inclusion in his chronicle, although he did not know either who wrote it and when, nor where it had been in use.

The manuscript codices present our document, anonymously to be sure, consistently in the context of writings of Hans Schlaffer[3] (who was

1 See H. S. Bender, article "Church" in the forthcoming first volume of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1955), 595; R. Friedmann, "Anabaptism and Protestantism," *MQR,* XXIV (1950), 21.

2 John C. Wenger, "The Schleitheim Confession of Faith, translated and edited with an Introduction," *MQR,* XIX (1945), 243-53.

3 W. Wiswedel, "Hans Schlaffer, ein ernster Beter und eifriger Verteidiger der göttlichen Wahrheit," in his *Bilder und Führergestalten aus dem Täufertum,* II (Kassel, 1930), 191-200.

martyred in Tirol on February 3, 1528) so that his authorship may be assumed with probability. It is certainly a church discipline of the pre-Hutterite period (say before 1529-30), since community of goods is not yet taught but only a "community of charity," that is, the care of needy brethren. Schlaffer comes from Upper Austria near Freistadt, but became active in the Inn Valley in northern Tirol, beginning about the middle of 1527.[4] From his different epistles to the church (*Gemein*) at Rattenberg on the Inn, which are full of love, concern, and words of fatherly admonition, we get the impression that he was the very *Vorsteher* or bishop of the Anabaptist group of that place, even though it was but for a short time. No document has survived the brutal persecutions which would tell us much about the life of this group. We know, however, of much martyrdom here and all along the Inn River in these early years of the Anabaptist movement. Hans Schlaffer was arrested and put into prison at Schwaz on the Inn in December, 1527. If our conjecture as to authorship is right, then his leadership was truly short-lived. But it must have been in these few months of 1527 that this outstanding (and too little studied) brother drew up his discipline for the apparently very live congregation at Rattenberg.[5] Whether he knew of the Schleitheim Articles, or even used them as a model, cannot be determined, but his *Ordnung* gives the impression of an original work by an Anabaptist leader.

The document is very brief, almost too brief (*ca.* 500 words only); hence it gives the impression of a first or preliminary draft of what a church discipline should be. The quick interference of the Tirolean government in all Anabaptist activities destroyed this incipient congregation of Rattenberg also, and gave it no chance to develop its organization. Soon Moravia was beckoning and those who could possibly leave left the Inn Valley, where, according to a chronicler,[6] the martyr pyres burned all along the river, costing the lives of close to a thousand brethren in the first decade.

Little needs to be said about the contents proper. It is genuinely and typically Anabaptist in spirit. Schlaffer belonged to the first generation where Biblicism and spiritualism fused into one primitive Christian attitude of vigor and strength. Every Anabaptist, although building his own church, well knew that his time would be short. Article ten expressly states that a Christian must always be prepared for the cross, in fact he should anticipate it. The entire tone of the document is practical—"how a Christian should live" within the brotherhood, and very little "technical" or legal. One might call it a "prophetic church discipline."

If the conjecture as to authorship is correct, then the document belongs to 1527, and not, as Braitmichel guessed, to 1529 when the Rattenberg group probably no longer existed. The text presented is not the one of the chronicle but is taken from one of the numerous Hutterite codices still extant among the Brethren in Canada and the United States. The translation was made by Elizabeth Horsch Bender. In brackets are added those passages which are missing in the document in the codex but present in the chronicle (*Geschicht-Buch*). The brackets also contain completions by the writer necessary to give full meaning to the statements. The text of the chronicle has almost no Bible references, while the codex document abounds in them.

4 J. Loserth, article "Inntal" in *Menn. Lex.* II, 421 f.

5 Called Rothenburg in all Anabaptist documents. Incidentally, it is the same place where *ca.* 1490-95 Pilgram Marpeck was born.

6 See Kirchmaier, *Chronik des Stiftes Neustift bei Brixen (Fontes Rerum Austriacarum,* I), 487.

Discipline of the Believers: How a Christian Is to Live
Introduction (missing in the *Geschicht-Buch*)

Since the almighty God and heavenly Father is permitting His eternal and all-powerful Word to be proclaimed to all creatures in these most perilous times (Col. 1) and has called us at this time out of pure grace into His marvelous light (I Pet. 3) to one body, one spirit, and one faith, united in the bonds of love (Eph. 4; I Cor. 1), to which we have all agreed, in order that our calling be found worthy, not only with the word of the mouth but in the truth and power (II Thess. 1; I Thess. 1; I Cor. 4; James 1), we have all in one another's presence openly agreed to regulate everything in the best possible way. For the improvement of our brotherhood [*Gemein,* so translated throughout], for the praise and honor of the Lord, and for the service of all the needy, we have unanimously agreed that this *Ordnung* shall be kept among us by all the brethren and sisters. When, however, a brother or sister is able to produce a better *Ordnung* it shall be accepted from him at any time (I Cor. 14).

First Article

And beginning: when the brethren are together they shall sincerely ask God for grace that He might reveal His divine will and help us to note it (Psalm 86, 118) and when the brethren part they shall thank God and pray for all the brethren and sisters of the entire-brotherhood (I Thess. 1 and 5; II Thess. 1 and 2; II Cor. 1; Col. 1, 3, 4).

Second Article

In the second place: we shall sincerely and in a Christian spirit admonish one another in the Lord to remain constant (Heb. 10:1; Acts 14, 15, 18; Col. 2). To meet often, at least four or five times, and if possible . . . even at midweek [prayer meetings?] (I Cor. 11, 14; Acts 1, 2, 9, 11, 20; Heb. 10; II Cor. 6; Matt. 18).

Third Article

In the third place: when a brother or sister leads a disorderly life it shall be punished: if he does so publicly [he] shall be kindly admonished before all the brethren (Gal. 2, 6; I Cor. 5; II Thess. 3); if it is secret it shall be punished in secret, according to the command of Christ (Matt. 18).

Fourth Article

In the fourth place: every brother or sister shall yield himself in God to the brotherhood completely with body and life, and hold in common all gifts received of God (Acts 2 and 4; I Cor. 11, 12; II Cor. 8 and 9), [and] contribute to the common need so that brethren and sisters will always be helped (Rom 12); needy members shall receive from the brotherhood as among the Christians at the time of the apostles (Acts 2, 4, 5; I Cor. 11, 12; Eph. 4; Prov. 5; Matt. 8, 15, 16, 17, 19; Luke 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18; I John 1, 2, 3, 4; Mark 3, 10, 12; Gal. 6; Heb. 13; Dan. 4, 8; Luke 6, 8; I Tim. 1; I Cor. 14, 16; Rom. 6, 18; James 1; Phil. 2).

Fifth Article

The elders [*Vorsteher*] and preachers chosen for the brotherhood shall with zeal look after the needs of the poor, and with zeal in the Lord according to the command of the Lord extend what is needed for the sake of and instead of the brotherhood (Gal. 2; II Cor. 8, 9; Rom. 15; Acts 6).

Sixth Article

In the sixth place: a decent conduct (*ehrbarer Wandel*) shall be kept among them (Rom. 12, 13; Phil. 1, 2; I Pet. 2, 3; I Cor. 1, 3; Gal. 5; Eph. 5) before everyone (Titus 3; Matt. 5; I Pet. 3) and no one shall carelessly conduct himself before the brotherhood both with words or deeds (Rom. 1, 6; II Tim. 2), nor before those who are "outside" (I Thess. 5; I Pet. 3).

Seventh Article

In the seventh place: in the meeting one is to speak and the others listen and judge what is spoken, and not two or three stand together (I Cor. 14). No one shall curse or swear (Matt. 5; Rom. 3; James 5) nor shall idle gossip be carried on, so that the weak may be spared (I Cor. 15; Eph. 5; Col. 3; II Tim. 2; Psalm 118). [*Geschicht-Buch* here cites only Ecclesiasticus 23.]

Eighth Article

In the eighth place: when the brethren assemble they shall not fill up with eating and drinking, but avoid expenses [reduce expenditures] to the least, [eat] a soup and vegetable or whatever God gives (I Cor. 11; I Pet. 4; Gal. 5; Rom. 13; Eph. 5; Eccles. 37; Luke 21), and when they have eaten, all the food and drink shall again be removed [*Geschicht-Buch:* "from the table"] (John 6; Matt. 4; Luke 9; Mark 6), for one should use with thanksgiving and moderation the creatures which God has created, pure and good, for our subsistence.

Ninth Article

In the ninth place: what is officially done among the brethren and sisters in the brotherhood [*Geschicht-Buch:* "or is judged"] shall not be made public before the world. The good-hearted [an interested but not yet converted or committed] person, before he comes to the brethren in the brotherhood shall be taught [*Geschicht-Buch:* "the Gospel"] (Mark 16; Rom. 1; Col. 1). When he has learned [*Geschicht-Buch*: "understood"] and bears a sincere desire for it, and if he agrees to the content of the Gospel, he shall be received by the Christian brotherhood as a brother or a sister, that is, as a fellow member of Christ (Matt. 7; Prov. 19, 29; Col. 4; Rom. 14; II Cor. 6; I Cor. 10; I Tim. 6; Matt. 10). But this shall not be made public before the world to spare the conscience and for the sake of the spouse (I Cor. 9, 10; Matt. 15).

Tenth Article

In the tenth place: all the brethren and sisters after they have committed themselves, shall accept and bear with patience all that He sends us [*Geschicht-Buch:* "accept with gratitude and bear with patience"] (Rom. 6; John 13; Matt. 16; Luke 9; I Pet. 4; II Cor. 12), and [shall] not let themselves be easily frightened by every wind and cry.[7]

Eleventh Article

When brethren and sisters are together, being one body and one bread in the Lord and of one mind, then they shall keep the Lord's Supper as a memorial of the Lord's death (Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; I Cor. 11), whereby each one shall be admonished to become conformed to the Lord in the obedience of the Father (Phil. 2, 3; I Pet. 2, 4; Rom. 8; I John 2.—Obedience: Rom. 2; Phil. 2; II Cor. 2, 10; II Thess. 1; I Pet. 1).

7 The *Geschicht-Buch* adds as a marginal note: "to be ready for cross and suffering."

Twelfth Article

In the twelfth place: as we have taught and admonished the brethren and sisters we shall always watch and wait for the Lord that we may be worthy to enter [the kingdom] with Him when He comes, and to escape or flee from the evil that will come to the world. Amen. (Matt. 25; Luke 21; I Thess. 5; I Pet. 5; II Pet. 3; Rom. 2).

God be merciful to me. I commend my spirit and your spirit with our brother in Christ into the hand of the eternal Father. Amen.

Here follows Hans Schlaffer's *Prayer and Thanksgiving at Mealtime.*

EDITORIAL (Continued from page 82)

life of love which the new birth is designed to produce, (3) failure to give full weight to the ethical aspects of God's redemptive work, and (4) almost total disregard of the church, which is the real sphere in which the Christian lives, and which is a divine means of grace. Yoder also points out significantly that Niebuhr actually does not know Biblical nonresistance as held by the Mennonites but deals only with the typical optimistic political action pacifism of the period between the two world wars. Yoder's answer, we hold, is the best yet given to the Niebuhrian critique, but it urgently requires elaboration into a full thesis.

THE PRESENT GENERATION IS AGAIN WITNESSING A MAJOR UNREST AND SCHISM in the Old Order Amish brotherhood, comparable to that which led to the division of 1855-80 between the reactionary Old Order and the progressive Amish Mennonite wings. The major result is the formation of the so-called "Beachy Amish" group of congregations (1921ff), now twenty-one in number, with over 1,500 members and still growing. During the same period at least a dozen other congregations have been formed from former Old Order elements, with another 1,000 members, some affiliating with the Mennonite Church and some with the Conservative Mennonite Conference. Numerous individuals also have transferred from the Old Order group to these two groups. A. J. Beachy's careful account of the "Rise and Development of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches" gives both a reliable and factual history of the Beachy movement and an interpretation of the causes producing it. Again, as in 1693 in Switzerland at the first Amish schism, the problem of the strict application of "shunning" plays the major role. But this time there is also the problem of cultural accommodation, i.e., the acceptance of modern inventions such as electricity and motorized vehicles. Without doubt the latter factor has played a major role in the whole Beachy movement. But besides this there is a third motivation in the Old Order unrest, namely, the desire for a deeper spiritual experience than that furnished by the typical Amish church life. This factor, it is probably true, has not worked so strongly in the case of the Beachy movement as in the movement into the Mennonite and Conservative Mennonite groups. The current ferment in several major Old Order communities is intensified by the rise of an interest in evangelism and missions, and the desire for a higher moral standard. This interest has not yet affected the Beachy group seriously, and may result in another schism distinct from it. It is possible that ultimately as much as a fourth of the Old Order group will have broken loose from its older moorings in the current unrest. However, the continued large Old Order families will probably replenish these losses. There is little prospect that the entire Old Order brotherhood will disintegrate; the social bonds and traditions are too strong for that.

THE REVIEW CONTINUES ITS PUBLICATION OF IMPORTANT ANABAPTIST SOURCE documents with the printing in the current issue of the outstanding "confession" of Claus Felbinger of 1560, a leader of the Hutterites in Moravia. Robert Friedmann's introduction gives the setting and significance of the document. The smaller document, "The First Anabaptist Church Discipline," discovered and edited by Friedmann likewise, is also of considerable significance as the first of its kind, though not as representative as the Schleitheim Articles of much the same period in Switzerland and South Germany.

Horse Trails Along the Desert. By Sanford C. Yoder. Illustrated by Ezra Hershberger. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1954. 5½ x 8. Pp. 182. $2.50.

The author of *Horse Trails Along the Desert,* now President Emeritus of Goshen College, homesteaded a quarter section of land in Washington state in the first decade of this century. Now he has recorded his memories of his four-year sojourn in America's Northwest. The story should appeal to many readers because it offers entertainment, instruction, and inspiration. The entertainment and instruction consist of the author's personal experiences as a homesteader in the Northwest's "Inland Empire" when wild horses were still being rounded up by buckaroos. These experiences are well told. They give the reader not only plenty of excitement and genuine western humor but also a firsthand report of pioneer life in southern Washington. The inspirational part consists of the author's interpretations of his experiences and his perceptive observations of sunsets, night skies, desert life, and other beauties of the primitive West that often lead him into some deeply felt meditations.

This book would have more historical value if the author had told some parts in greater detail. How was his first house built and furnished? What was the advice he received from the old settler? What was the trivial affair that killed George Evans? What were some of the games and stories mentioned in connection with roundups? One wishes that these incidents had been reported as minutely and as well as the breaking of a wild stallion by a skillful buckaroo or the author's painful search for water in the Horseheaven country. One also wishes that the author had used the first person more freely to give a more definite setting to "A Day with the Roundup."

The interesting chapter on Chief Joseph, although a digression, is valuable because Mennonites should know more about this heroic and peace-loving leader of the Nez Perce Indians. Most of the authorities cited are reliable, but it seems unfortunate that Chester Anders Fee's definitive biography of Chief Joseph was and the article from *True magazine* included.

No one will go wrong in buying this book. It can be had for less than the cost of many an evening's commercial entertainment, and it certainly offers more enduring benefits in its short enjoyable chapters and its excellent illustrations.

University of Oregon Roland Bartel

Sing and Dance with the Pennsylvania Dutch. By Ruth L. Hausman. Illustrated by Frances Lichten. New York: Edward B. Marks Music Corporation, 1953. Pp. 112. $2.00.

This songbook on the Pennsylvania Dutch contains a description of an Amish preaching service, an Amish singing, and an Amish wedding. The first song in the book is the "Hymn of Praise," the *Lobsang* as recorded by Joseph W. Yoder in German with an English translation. Five other selections are taken from Yoder's *Amische Lieder.* The principal "dance" selections in the book are the three party games played by the Amish, Skip to My Lou, O-HI-O, and Bingo, together with directions for playing the games. In view of this, the title of the book gives a somewhat misleading impression.

"The music of Dutchland," according to Ruth Hausman, has been sadly neglected in the available literature. "Perhaps this is because of a belief rather commonly held and often expressed that though the Pennsylvania Dutch folklore is rich in riddles, superstitions, proverbs, and legends, a dearth of folk music exists and no offering has been made by them to musical Americana. To refute these fallacious statements my research began and became more and more fascinating as one source of information led to another," she states.

There are a few minor errors in the textual materials which could have been avoided had the section on the "Plain People" been checked by a Mennonite historian. Only songs used by the Amish represent her collection for the Plain People's section, but she states in the preface that "Apologies are due the Mennonites and the Dunkards for simply mentioning them and not including their music."

The two remaining sections, The "Church People," and Moravians, are given considerably more space and discussion. The selections include hymns as well as secular folk songs, and Pennsylvania Dutch spirituals such as the *O Gott schick runner deine Kraft,* and *O Herr schick mir mehr Gnaden* type. The famous *Schnitzelbank* and other almost forgotten selections are here reproduced for new use. The German selections also appear in the English language.

Scottdale, Pa. John A. Hostetler